THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy AND Science Fiction

A MERCURY PUBLICATION

SEPTEMBER 50¢

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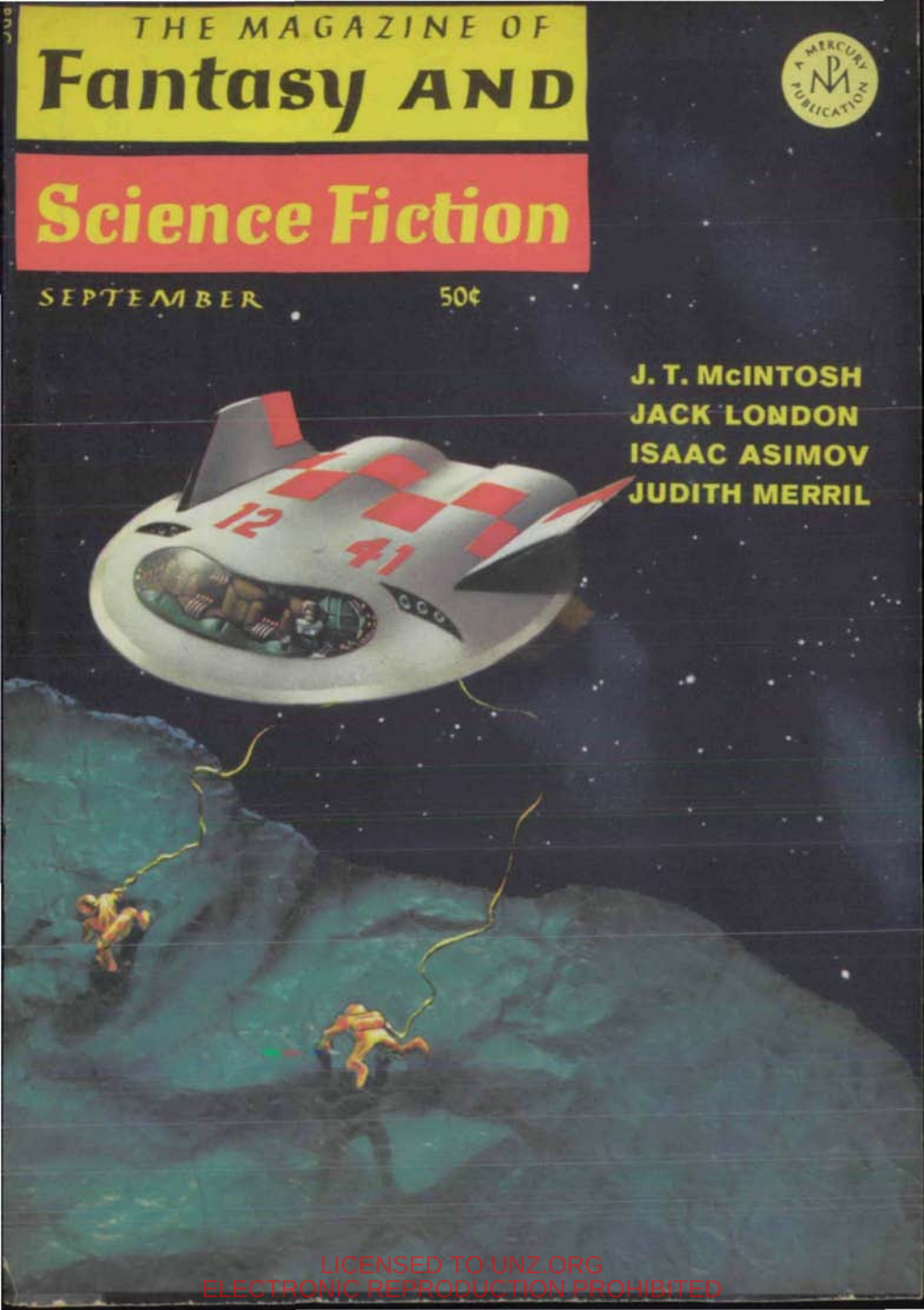

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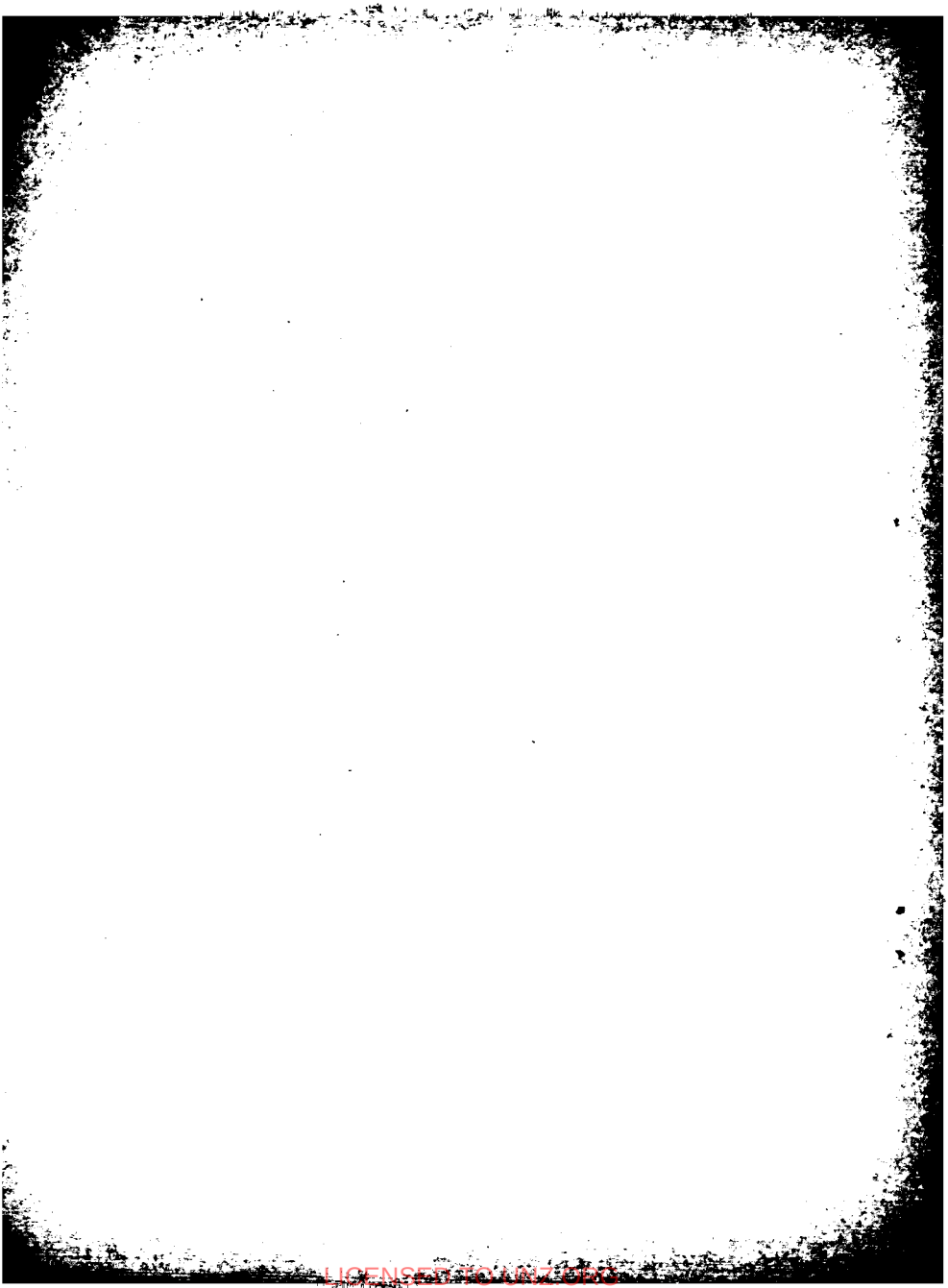

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Fantasy and Science Fiction

SEPTEMBER *Including Venture Science Fiction*

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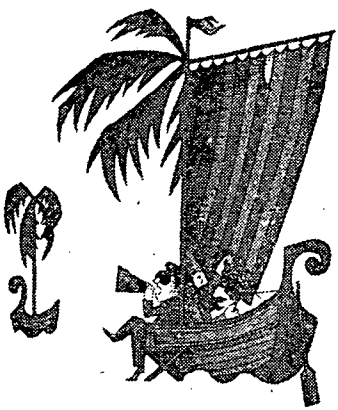
BACK THROUGH TIME, FORTH THROUGH SPACE... WITH DOUBLEDAY SCIENCE FICTION



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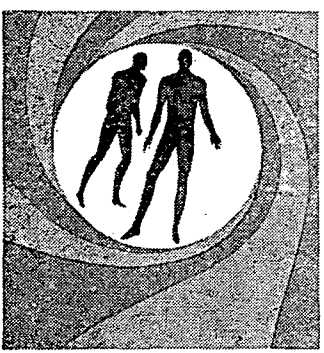

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DOUBLEDAY

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George Collyn is a young British writer who has been published frequently in New Worlds. *This is his first story to appear in the U. S. (the first of many, we suspect): an admirably strong and concise account of an astronaut with a fifty year handicap, and his attempt to adjust to a society which has moved in unforeseen directions.*

OUT OF TIME, OUT OF PLACE

by George Collyn

IF I HAD STAYED WITH THE others and we had stuck together as a team, it probably need never have happened—we could have formed a mutual defense against our individual insecurity. As it was, our nerves were rubbed red-raw with the sight of one another.

Of the fifty years we had spent together, all but ten had been spent in stasis. That is true. But ten years in an enclosed environment is quite enough for a man to become intolerably aware of every fault in his companions. Mannerisms which are quite innocuous in themselves become emotional dynamite when one sees them repeated year in and year out. This is especially true when one's living conditions preclude any form of privacy and every single function of one's waking life has to be carried out in the sight of your fellows; and theirs in yours.

At first we were forced to remain as a group in order to justify the official junketings which celebrated the return of the first ship to journey beyond the solar system. As soon as the festivities were over, we heaved a collective sigh of relief and went our separate ways; seeking our own individual adjustments to the world which had aged fifty years to our ten.

Reactions were as varied as we were individuals. Peter, our captain, relished his role as our representative at the banquets, receptions and audiences which were given in our name. He could enjoy his share of the limelight—and the best of luck to him.

Without that prop, the rest of us fell into three distinct schools.

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There were those who did not give a damn and who plunged into their renewed lives with the insensitivity to their surroundings of a drunk in a low dive. There were others who set out to explore this strange new world with the same zest for the unknown that explorers have always exhibited. The majority—and I was one of them—could not make the psychological adjustment to a world which was all the more strange for being hauntingly familiar. Out of our crew of twenty-eight there were four suicides within a year of our return. Of the rest, most turned inwards on themselves and shut out the world.

When one is twenty-three, the thought of the problems inherent in returning, at the age of thirty-three, to find that the world has progressed through fifty years of social and technological change, seems unimportant. To the young, progress must remain an abstract concept simply because they do not possess the retrospective breadth of vision to see how a cumulation of minor changes can, over the years, revolutionize a way of life.

I had, of course, been aware of an older generation which criticised the world their juniors were creating. But my elders had at least had the chance to shape the world. They had seen 'changes' but, because they had lived through them and not had to assimilate them in one go, they were less aware of 'Change.'

No one, least of all my twenty-three year old self, could foresee the emotional impact of our return from Space to a world which had changed out of all recognition. It was like being born again, but with all our ideas and prejudices already formed and at variance with the accepted social norm.

Certain things one could steel oneself to meet—only to have one's ideas overset by the unexpected. I had told myself that my father would be dead when I returned; that my step-mother—his second wife and a girl of my own age—would be an old woman; that my baby step-sister, whom I had last seen squalling in her cot, would be fifty-odd and could well have grandchildren as old as my memory of her. All this I was prepared for—I was not prepared for the advances in geriatric drugs and treatment. I was met at the airport by my centenarian father. Not only was he still alive, he looked younger than I did with the strain of a decade telling on my thirty-three years. The meeting made me sick to my stomach, as if I had had to watch some obscene perversion.

More than these very personal upsets, it was the general greyness of life which revolted me. Not the greyness in color though—with the massive, concrete slabs that passed as architecture and the drab, dungaree-like garments which passed as clothing for both sexes—that was depressing enough. Rather it

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was greyness as a quality of life which obsessed me. These people might have abolished old-age, but they had destroyed the joy of youth in the process. People walked the ugly streets in their ugly clothes and their faces were the ugliest of all. Blank, vacant, lack-lustre, they seemed to see but not feel.

Add to all this the technological advances of a half-century and guess at my perplexity. There was a driverless vehicle they called a robo-cab; some new entertainment medium they called the altrigo and various other weirdly named gadgets whose names I never did understand. In fact I knew the workings and purpose of none of the new inventions, though there were people enough willing to explain them to me. I just shut my ears and, as soon as I had permission to go, fled to an apartment the Space Agency rented on my behalf.

The apartment consisted of five rooms perched, in glorious isolation, on top of one of their man-made mountains. It possessed only one modern invention: an automatic food-dispensing machine. For this at least I was grateful, since it removed any need for contact with the outside world. For the rest I had my books and my records to pass my time. At first I persisted with the video in the hopes that through it I could come to know, and accept, the world. But for some reason the video had lost its popularity, and all I could receive were two part-time channels. Since almost everything they talked about was incomprehensible to me, I fell back on the written word and the music of Bartok and Schoenberg. And I spent a lot of time in half-sleep, half depressed reverie.

If I tried to forget the world, the world refused to forget me. Mail poured through my door and the phone never stopped its summons. At one point I burnt all the former and disconnected the latter. As a result I was nearly court-martialled for failing to attend a presidential reception, the invitation to which I either destroyed or did not receive. In the end I employed a man to intercept all calls and open all letters, gauging their merit before he passed them on to me. The same man acted as my agent for all external transactions.

What merit Barbara Fellin possessed in this man's eyes I cannot say. She claimed to be my sister-in-law, having married a brother who was born after my departure and who died, by accident, before my return. Our relationship should not have given her the automatic right to speak to me; my relations were under the ban. Yet my censor saw fit to put her through to me—to my eternal regret.

She wanted to invite me to a party. I gathered it was to be one of the come-and-stare-at-the-fa-

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mous types of affairs, and I was to be one of the stared-at celebrities. That I should go was unthinkable to me and alien to my frame of mind at that time. And yet, when she rang off, I found that I had in fact agreed to attend; and in such a way as made it impossible for me to retract later.

That entire sequence of events was enough to convince me of the inevitability of Fate. So much happened that should not have happened; from Barbara Fellin contacting me to my agreeing to go to her party. I can hardly think I was defeated by her arguments. Rather I must have suffered a revulsion of feeling as complete as the one that had led to my seclusion.

That party re-introduced me to a world I thought had ceased to exist. If the world at large was drab and uniformly grey, that party was a riot of color. I had been reluctant to attend, but I had not known then that these gay and vivacious people still existed. When the gaiety and color washed over me, I felt the tensions drain away and, for the first time in over a year, I began to think that life was worth pursuing.

My hostess was a momentary deterrent who gushed like the adolescent her petrified looks falsely proclaimed her to be. I do not know how old she really was; I was too disgusted by the idea of artificial preservation to want to know. But she looked to be no more than nineteen and she dressed and acted accordingly; hanging on my arm and gazing into my eyes with all the fervour of a teenager with a crush on a hero-figure.

She noticed my limp and immediately referred to it—to my great embarrassment. I tried to gloss over the accident which caused it, but she exclaimed loudly that I must not mind because she thought it was so romantic and how brave we spacemen were. The entire company must have heard her and, certain that all eyes must be on me, I trailed self-consciously after her, feeling like a Byronic figure of tragedy in a nineteenth century salon.

For a time I was content again. I wandered among the guests, eating, drinking and exchanging commonplace talk about commonplace subjects which, in their capacity for being discussed at length without involving serious content, had not changed in fifty years.

The girl was standing alone in one of the inner rooms. I caught myself staring at her, and involuntarily I smiled. One could not help smiling at this girl; she radiated so much that was calm, warm and friendly. She was aware of and part of the party and yet not quite part of it, so that she formed a still center of the storm around

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which so much frenetic energy eddied; leaving her untouched. She was alone but not aloof, smiling on the guests with a gentle benediction in her luminous eyes.

I had bewailed the lack of color in this world, but this girl, in blacks and whites, was more striking than the gaudiest scarlet. The skin of her face and shoulders was the pure, glowing white of pearl, while her flowing hair was so deeply black as to appear to have blue-purple highlights. Her dress was of the same glossy black and was austerely and classically draped, falling to her ankles in utter simplicity.

She drew me like a magnet, the other guests parting momentarily to form a corridor between us, as if two poles of attraction were repelling all extraneous matter.

"Good evening," I remember saying, "my name is David Fellin."

"I know and I'm very pleased to meet you," she said, quite simply.

I was completely at a loss for something to say. I felt I had to say something or appear a moonstruck idiot. Yet, everything which came readily to my tongue seemed either too trite or too flippant for the impression I wanted to make on her. I was rescued from my dilemna by my hostess.

"Oh, you've met," cried Barbara. "I'm so glad—She's Marion Watkins, you know."

She hissed the last into my ear in a stage whisper that half the room must have overheard. I was confused partly because I did not know the name which was obviously meant to convey something to me; partly because I could not resist Marion's obvious amusement at Barbara's awe-struck tone. I regret to say that I laughed aloud—to the discomfiture of my hostess.

Barbara moved off again, her butterfly mind flitting from task to task and rapidly forgetting my slip in the delight at being the nucleus of so many people's attention. Marion and I were left in companionable silence.

"When can I see you again?" I said at last.

"We've only just met," she said and her eyes danced, her nose twitched, her mouth curved, every mobile feature of her face partook of and communicated her amusement. "Why ask to see me for a second time when you're still seeing me for the first time?"

"I mean away from all these people. I know I want to meet you and talk to you. But I don't like people."

"I know."

"That's the second time you've said 'I know'. How can you know so much about me when I know nothing about you?"

"But you are the nation's favorite mystery man at the moment, didn't you know? David Fellin, the spaceman recluse; the hermit of Tower Block C; the man who has

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been to the stars but will not cross the street. What does he look like? Don't you realise that Barbara only got so many people here because they hoped to meet you?"

I was lost for a second and it was then, with so much more left to say, that Barbara pounced, like a persistent dog who cannot leave go of a bone.

"David, I'm most annoyed with you. Those people who didn't come to meet you, came to meet Marion. I can't have my two main attractions monopolizing one another. Now come and meet some people."

I was dragged away unwillingly and put to the purgatory of meeting more people. I lost sight of Marion and my misery soon became so acute that I made a hurried and early departure, without seeing her again.

I did see her again, however. Simply because, having got her phone number from Barbara, I bombarded her with calls until she agreed to see me. How I would have overcome my revulsion for the outside world if Marion had asked me to face it I do not know; although, for her, I think I would have made the effort. As it was, Marion, like myself, and like a mere handful of others, had a taste for a way of life that had died with the previous century. She introduced me to an entire sub-world which existed to cater for tastes not attuned to the contemporary greyness. We went together to places where we ate meat that had lived and vegetables that had been plucked from the earth rather than from some chemical tank: places where the food was served by human waiters and waitresses; places where we were entertained by live singers and dancers.

Such a way of life was expensive of course. The food, the clothes Marion wore, all these things—things and habits which were commonplace in my youth, were now the perquisite of only the rich and few. Luckily my state-given pension was quite large enough to cover such expenditure and Marion too seemed to be moderately wealthy.

"What do you do?" I once asked her. "You seem to be very well-paid. Are you an actress?"

"Yes," she said. "I suppose you could call me an actress."

"But act at what? There's no stage, no movies, no video . . ."

"I act at life," she said. "I live to the full for people who are only half-alive."

I did not understand her and thought she was speaking metaphorically. As if I already knew that full knowledge would only distress me, I shied away from the topic and switched to some safer subject.

I do not think that I ever asked Marion to marry me. Somehow

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and at some point in our relationship, it simply became understood that we would marry.

The ceremony was a compromise. Marion, as was natural in a woman, wanted as gay and as splendid an affair as was possible. Still anti-social, I wanted as quick and as secretive a wedding as was possible. In the end we were married in one of the city's ancient churches and with all due pomp and circumstance. But only a few of Marion's close friends were present. For myself, I had no guests—not even relatives.

I had succeeded in buying a private flier. It cost a small fortune because such a machine was a rare antique at that time. But as soon as the ceremony was over and I was alone in the air with Marion, I felt that the cost was worthwhile. Having tasted the freedom of the air, I left my cares with the world on the ground. My joy in the flight, in my bride, in having my hands on the controls, was briefly marred by the sight from the air of the grey amorphous mass of buildings which stretched from horizon to horizon. But Nature is too old, too strong and too wily to be ever totally defeated by Man. The city finally ended and the pristine green of grass and trees succeeded the grey of concrete.

In the early evening we descended to the hideaway that the Space Agency had found for us—a stone lodge crouching where a tree-filled valley debauched onto silver sands, within sight, sound and scent of the sea. We were quite alone. No roads led to the valley and it was never over-flown. For a week we were totally given over to each other and to nothing else.

I can find no words for my feelings during that time. Perhaps any two people in love feel the same, but the feelings are so personal that it seems a unique experience that could never be shared by anyone else. We did things that week that would seem laughable or shameful if written down or spoken of—and yet, because of our mutual trust they were natural and beautiful actions.

All the fears, the distaste, the unease with which I had faced that strange world disappeared in the joy of our marriage and union.

I had been soured by my first contact with the world and became bitter in the process, but living with Marion was slowly melting the barrier of ice I had erected around myself.

Marion made no demand that I change my way of life. All she asked was that I should not seek to impose it on her. She came and went as she had always done, but gradually I grew accustomed to accompanying her to restaurants and on shopping expeditions. And, as Marion broke down my reserve, these expeditions became more

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frequent. I became almost tolerant of all the strange customs of the world; except for the almost hysterical curiosity with which my appearance on the street was greeted by certain people. This I assumed to be the result of my brief fame as an astronaut. For a time I was tolerant and happy.

Then the nightmare began. It was a fine spring morning and I was alone in the apartment, Marion having gone to an appointment with her dressmaker. The phone warbled its call-note.

I had retained my agent to intercept all incoming calls. I therefore felt safe in answering.

"My name is Sheldon Walker," said the man with the good-living, smooth face," and I'm a vice-president of the Altrigo Corporation."

"I'm afraid my wife is not here," I said, assuming that he wished to speak to Marion. I knew now that Marion was employed and extremely well paid by the Altrigo Corporation, engaged by them as an actress in whatever form of entertainment they purveyed. About what form that took, I was not too clear.

"I didn't want to speak to Marion, Mr. Fellin," he said. "It was you I wished to speak to. Do you think that you could come round to our office for an hour or so? I have a proposition to put to you."

And I agreed, may the Lord help me.

The offices of the Altrigo Corporation were, by the addition of a little chrome strip and stainless-steel panelling, a little less drab than their neighbors in the commercial quarter. The building was also singled out from its fellows by the knots of people who congregated in the street to stare at it as if it were some shrine or national monument. As I climbed out of the robo-cab which had brought me, I felt their eyes turn to me, and I fled from their gaze like a nocturnal animal fleeing from the blaze of the sun.

I was received like visiting royalty. Doors opened at my approach and an army of deferential heralds bowed and scraped me through the corridors which led to Walker's door.

Sheldon Walker in life was as smooth, plump and ingratiating as his image on my phone screen. Like myself and Marion and the rest of our circle, he was dressed in a brightly-hued suit quite at variance with the grey commonalty. His office was luxuriously appointed, and he obviously belonged to this world's anachronistic elite.

He made a command performance out of seating me, of providing me with food and drink. He showed a startling reluctance to get down to the business in hand. When it came, he blurted it out without preliminary.

"We want you to work for us. In

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fact we need you as an emitter so much that you can virtually state your own terms. Marion has always been popular but since the marriage her ratings have rocketed way over the top of the chart. Now we're being besieged by the menfolk who, because we won't accept cross-sex subscribers, feel they're being deprived of something."

"I'm afraid I don't know what you're talking about, Mr. Walker."

"I'm asking you to become an emitter for Altrigo, Mr. Fellin—a full twenty-four hour, unshared channel on the Altrigo network. Just like your wife."

"But what would it involve?" I asked—I had no acting skill.

"Well, there's the operation of course. But it's very simple and quite painless I assure you. If you want to know more, I'm sure that one of the technical staff can . . ."

"You don't understand, Mr. Walker. I don't mean I want to know *how* your system works. I don't know what it *is;* what it *does.*"

He looked at me with all the astonishment he would have shown had I pleaded ignorance of the facts of life. "But surely Marion has . . ."

"She began to explain. But you must understand that I am like a man who has been resurrected from the dead. The world I knew and grew up in is the world of fifty years ago. Perhaps I should try and understand your world, but there is so much in it that is repugnant or incomprehensible, that I do not want to understand. And Altrigo, as far as I can tell, is so much a part of the world that I would much rather know nothing about it."

"Mr. Fellin . . . Dave . . . You cannot begin to understand the world until you know something about the Altrigo system. It may have started as entertainment, but nowadays it's one of the primary bases of our civilization. I must show you."

He pressed a switch on his desk intercom and, when his secretary answered, said, "Miss Matthews, will you tune my desk set to the Marion Fellin channel please."

From his desk he picked up a dark tangle of filaments and held it out to me, telling me to slip it over my head. It was like a net of fibrous strands with nodules of metal shining in the mesh. I pulled it over my head where it clung, limpet-like. I wanted to protest at the discomfort—it was tight and the metal tags dug at my scalp. Yet, even as I opened my mouth, I was no longer aware of it. For that matter, I was no longer aware of myself, the room, of Walker.

I was standing, it seemed, in a dress-shop, adjusting a dress which an assistant had just slipped over my head, an assistant who said, "I think madam will be

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pleased, if madam would care to look in the mirror . . ." The illusion of being this other person was overwhelming. It was not just that I could see and hear with this person's eyes and ears—I could feel the cool silk on my body and the touch of the assistant as she smoothed a crease from the material; I could smell the delicate odor of the perfume I—this other person—was wearing. Even the thoughts and consciousness of that person were fighting to dispossess my own but were held back for a moment by the tumult in my mind as the certainty grew that when this person looked in the mirror I would see—and I did —my wife.

I admire myself in the mirror. The dress is perfect. It looks right; it feels right; it is right. I run my hands down my body, feeling the sheen of the material and give a little twist to see the hem flare.

"Madam likes it?"

"Oh yes," I say. "It's beautiful. I'll take it."

"It is a little expensive but I'm sure it is worth it. I'm certain Mr. Fellin will admire it."

I'm sure he will too, and blush a little at the thought. And blush a little deeper at my own weakness. One year married and I still act like an innocent bride when I think of David.

There was a flash of violent color and a voice in my head said, "This is channel fifteen of the Altrigo Corporation. Your alter ego is Marion Fellin. Under statute number twenty-eight of the authority constituting the Corporation we must now give you sixty seconds in which to orientate yourself and switch off your receiver if you so desire. These breaks will follow at quarter hour intervals and this warning is emitted every hour, on the hour."

I was back in Walker's office. I looked across at him, and he stretched out his hand towards the switch to which the headpiece was joined by a thin cord. Bemused, but wanting to know more, I shook my head.

I am walking down the street, delighting in the warm spring breeze and the admiring glances of the people I pass. Should I go back to the apartment, I think. No, I decide, I'll have a cup of coffee with the crowd at Magrit's.

Over a dozen of them are there in the darkened room with the scent of coffee and chocolate, pastry and cream. My new dress is the center of attention, drawing looks of envy from the women and of admiration from the men.

This time Walker cut it off without asking me.

"That will be enough I think," he said. "In a way I'm breaking the rules in letting you see that—female channels are strictly for women only. But I felt that your wife was your best introduction to . . ."

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"How long has this been going on?" I broke in.

"With Marion you mean? Since shortly after her twelfth birthday, I believe. Her father signed the contract with us as soon as she was legally of age to become an emitter. That means she's been with us for nearly twenty years. That's why she's so popular—half our audience have watched her grow from a girl to womanhood."

"But how . . . ?"

"As I told you, I'm no technician but, basically, there is a tiny emitter buried in the brains of our emitter subjects. This picks up and transmits the brain patterns of that subject. We receive the signals, amplify them and send them over the wire to our subscribers. Twenty-eight channels, fourteen for men and fourteen for women, eighteen of them nationally networked."

"And how often do you transmit? I mean, how many hours a day can these people . . . how do you put it? . . . tune in on my wife?"

"Oh, it never stops. We can't switch off the emitters, you know. They transmit twenty-four hours a day. Of course, a subscriber won't be tuned in on one emitter all the time; there are competing channels. Then a subscriber has to eat, sleep and go to work. That's why we have the breaks—it's very easy for subscribers to become so immersed in an emitter's life that they forget about their own existence."

"And how many people are there spying on my wife?"

"You shouldn't say spying, you know." He was bluff, trying to laugh off my choice of words. "It's very seldom that a subscriber is with Marion all the time but, since the interest created by the marriage, I suppose between ninety and a hundred million subscribers tune in to channel fifteen at some time during the day."

I could hear Marion's voice saying, "I act at life. I live to the full for people who are only half alive." So much was explained. Particularly the lack-lustre absence of vitality in the community. Why live yourself when someone else can do it for you so much better, so much more richly, so much more vividly?

"You sicken me," I said suddenly.

"What do you mean?" yelled Walker with that shrillness of a man who knows he is defending something which is, at root, indefensible. "Don't you see the benefits this brings? There have always been the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots. How much truer that is today when the world's population is growing out-of-hand. Who can afford to live above subsistence level except a very few? But, thanks to Altrigo, the people who have the riches

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are the people who can share the good things with the masses, and share them in full. In reality the masses eat stodge, wear rags, live in hutches. But through Marion and the people like her, they can eat in luxury restaurants, wear silk and worsted, sleep between linen sheets . . ."

His argument sounded moral and just. But I was remembering an incident from our honeymoon.

It was night, and the rolling breakers were foaming white against the black, glass-like surface of the sea. Marion and I had bathed in the light of the full moon and then lain, naked and wet, on the beach in the warm, evening air. We did not even make love but just lay there, peacefully content. Our bodies were apart but close enough for each to feel the presence of the other and we linked hands. We said nothing but shared the peace and silence of that moment. I had thought then that if anyone had seen us they would have thought us at best laughable, if not mad. And yet, in a strange way, that was one of the most perfect moments of my life—simply because we were alone together and sharing our pleasure. Now it burst upon me that I might well have been sharing that moment with untold millions of women.

I felt utterly debased. I felt unclean inside. I felt an utter hatred for the entire parasitic system as personified by Walker and my wife. Without another word I ran from that room.

I was pursued from the building and along the streets by the cries of Walker and his minions, but I did not hear them because I was also pursued by my own self-created phantoms. Every woman I passed in the street could have been the recipient of words and actions which I could only have said or done to a person I loved. Every alley seemed to be full of hidden eyes and the air seemed full of scandalised whispers.

I slammed the door of the apartment against them but, this time, I could not shut out the world.

She came out of the bedroom, as lovely and desirable as ever, wearing the dress I now knew only too well. If I could have seen her then through the all-accepting eyes of courtship, perhaps I might have understood and accepted things as they were. I did not, could not, hate Marion, but behind her eyes lived millions of creeping things—parasites who fed on her emotions.

"I'll teach you to stare at me," I yelled at them. "So you want to know how to live? Well learn what it's like to die."

And I took Marion's throat in my hands.

They tell me I killed Marion. What is harder to believe is that,

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since the emitter never ceased to function as she died, I killed more than two million other women as well. That there were not more, I am told, is due to the pure coincidence that one of the statutory breaks occured before Marion's life was quite extinct.

Their figures mean nothing to me; I find it hard enough to grasp the one simple fact of my murder of Marion. I do not believe I intended to do more than frighten her and them. But I can only remember what I have told you; everything else is buried in a haze which persisted until I came round, here in prison. I know only what other people tell me about my trial and the feelings of anger which swept the world.

I hear the rioters and lynch-mobs have been out on the streets, calling for my blood. Well, for their sakes, I wish I could die. I am so sorry—not for those two million; I know nothing of them —but for killing my lovely Marion. How could she be guilty when what she did was regarded as commonplace in her world?

My own crime was not in killing her but in marrying her. However much I thought I knew her, I could not in fact know anyone in her world any more than she could have known anyone in mine. There is no geographical gap which is as great as the gap between the ages. My own age died fifty years ago, and I should have died with it. I can never have any sympathy with the present. Over and over I tell myself that I have deprived two million human beings of their lives. And time and again my true self answers, saying, those same people had deprived the entire human race of its dignity.

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This story and the one by William Sambrot which follows have a common theme: i. e., a confrontation between West African magic and British-American rationalism. In all other things—including the scene itself—the two stories are different. In Mr. Frazer's tale, the West African juju *is imported to a British school for boys, with chilling results.*

THE CYCLOPS JUJU

by Shamus Frazer

IT WAS FROM BRADBURY MINOR I first heard about the juju.

"Have you seen Winterborn's god, sir? It came by post this morning."

"God?"

"Yes, from Africa. It's only got one eye, and it's most awfully ugly, sir."

And when Winterborn brought it along for my inspection I found that Bradbury had for once not exaggerated: it *was* most awfully ugly, though not from the kind of distortion one expects in a West African carving. The work was African, but the features and their evil were European.

"Did your father send this, Winterborn?"

"My stepfather, yes, sir. It belonged to a real witchdoctor. He took it from his hut."

"Did the witchdoctor mind?"

"The letter says he'd run off into the bush, so my stepfather's policemen turned out everything and burnt down the hut. He was a very bad witchdoctor, and if he'd been caught he would have been hung . . . Do you think he's a god, sir?"

"A juju of some kind, I expect—a bad juju."

"Gosh! He's beautifully hideous—just like that one-eyed monster in the Latin play, we're doing . . . the cyclone chap who's a cannibal, *you* know, sir—Polly . . ."

". . . Wolly doodle?"

"No of course it isn't, sir. I just can't remember the name."

"Polyphemus, the cyclops—*not* cyclone, Winterborn."

I was new to schoolmastering, but already I'd adopted that deplorable correcting habit.

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"Polyphemus, *of course* . . . He's exactly as I imagine Polyphemus to have been, only much smaller. But he's heavy. You feel him, sir."

I took the thing and turned it over in my fingers. It was carved from some iron hard wood, crudely but effectively painted. There was something about the slant of the body and the upturned tilt of the head that was suggestive—but of what I had for the moment no idea. It had almost a Greek look: the scrolly carving of the red hair and beard set about the dead white face, the square mouth opening on pointed ivory fangs bore a hazy resemblance to the masks of Tragedy. But it was not in Ancient Greece that I should find the clue to that tilted head and upstretched throat, the single eye staring oddly skywards: the association my mind groped for seemed to belong to a later date. I spoke the explanation before I was properly aware it had presented itself to me:

"You know, Winterborn—I think it's a model of a ship's figurehead."

"Surely it's too small, sir?"

"It's a model, a small scale model—but it's more like an eighteenth-century ship's figurehead than the usual line in African idols, don't you think."

"But it *is* African."

"It's African work, I should say, but copied from a European model."

"Then it isn't a god at all," Winterborn seemed despondent about this, "only a bit of a smelly model boat! What a swiz!"

"I don't see why it shouldn't be a god," I said. "After all they've given their idols top-hats before now, and this cyclops figurehead would surely seem more powerful juju than a silk hat. My idea is it's a model of a slave-ship's figurehead —which would make it very strong white man's medicine, indeed. It's ugly and evil enough to have been a really big noise among the bush gods. Here, take the horrible thing back before he puts a hoodoo on me!"

I gave a mock shudder which turned into a real one, for I had a passing vision—peculiarly intense —of the thing in my hands grown enormous, nodding above the mangroves in some foetid West African rivermouth, with the bowsprit pointing above it like a great spear, and the patched sails drumming idly in the scanty wind.

"A slaver's figurehead turned into a god!" Winterborn positively crooned over his restored treasure. "Do you really think so, sir?"

"I shouldn't be at all surprised: the black brig *Cyclops* or *Polyphemus,* who knows? You can imagine the impression a figurehead ten times that size would make leering over the mudbanks. To keep him sweet-tempered the locals made a model of him, I expect, and took him ashore and

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treated him to the sacrifices he liked best."

"Gosh, I see what you mean, sir —about the ship's figurehead. It must have been a *beastly* ship."

"The very worst."

"He doesn't look all that sweet-tempered just now, does he, sir? Perhaps he's missing his sacrifices. Do you think he'd care for milk chocolate?"

"He'd demand a stronger diet, I'm afraid, than milk chocolate."

"Blood, sir? And human hearts torn reeking from their shrieking . . ."

"Something of the kind, no doubt."

"Tell you what. If it's sausages for supper I'll save a piece for Poly . . . for Pollywolly doodle, sir."

After the coming of the juju I noticed that Winterborn took a greater interest in his Latin, or at least in the rehearsals we were holding that term for the play. There was a tradition at Sheridan House School that the boys performed two plays annually on Prize Day, a Latin as well as an English one: Roger Edlington, who a few years ago had taken over the headmastership from his father, had also inherited the rather old-fashioned view that parents should be impressed before they are entertained, and the Latin play was of course intended to impress. Roger had asked me to produce both plays that year, and I had chosen the little drama about Ulysses and the Cyclops because it was short and easy to learn and contained enough mime and incident to enable even the Latinless parent, with the aid of the short synopsis I was to have printed in the programme, to follow the plot. Moreover, the rather *Grand Guignol* theme should make effective contrast with *Toad of Toad Hall* which was to follow.

Winterborn was cast at first as a cyclopean sheep, but this did not satisfy him at all; and when Fenwick went down with yellow jaundice, he promptly suggested himself for the post of Polyphemus.

"But you're about half Fenwick's size," I said, "Polyphemus was a giant."

"You were going to build up a cardboard head for Fenwick anyway, sir. You could make it taller for me, that's all."

"If you're able to play the part I could do that, I suppose."

Winterborn looked challengingly at the rest of the form.

"Bags I Polyphemus," he said.

Nobody took up the challenge.

"It's a longish part, Winterborn," I said, "will you be able to learn it?"

"I've learnt it already, sir. I never thought Fenwick was much good, even before he turned yellow —so I thought I'd better understudy the part. And I tell you what, sir, when you make that carnival head for me, you can copy the face from Pollywolly doodle's."

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"Your juju? I've not seen him around lately."

"Oh, I keep him in the dorm."

"He takes him to bed with him, sir," said Bradbury, "to give him sweet dreams—sweet, I don't think!"

"Oh, put a stopper in it, Bradbury and shut off the stink!"

"Well, let's try you out in the part, Winterborn."

Surprisingly he was very good, and only had to be prompted twice. The shriek he gave when the Cyclops' eye is burnt out was startlingly realistic—a harsh, shrill, angry cry like the screaming of a peacock. He got the part—and before long was playing uninvited the role of assistant producer too.

That scene where Ulysses and his sailors heat up the giant's staff and drive the point into the eye of sleeping Polyphemus, the most dramatic in the play, could so easily sink into farce if its mechanics went wrong. I had thought of making a detachable eye in the false head, something on the principle of a bathplug that could be pulled out of the socket by a jerk from within: I had even toyed with the idea of a glowing electric eye which would be switched out at the moment of blinding; but neither of these methods seemed wholly proof against ridicule or disaster. It was Winterborn who hit on a solution which though gruesome was both simple and effective.

"Look, sir, they put the staff in the brazier to heat it up. The fire is just red paper with a light behind it. Well couldn't we have a pot of red paint in the brazier too? Then all they've got to do is to poke the end of the pole into the paint, so that when they pull it out the tip looks red hot, and smear it over my . . . over Polyphemus' painted eye until it's just a scarlet mess like raspberry jam."

"It's an idea, Winterborn—but it'll take two heads for the two performances. I'd like to try it out on the school audience at the dress rehearsal first, and there'll hardly be time to repaint the face for the parents next day."

"Oh, that's all right sir," said Winterborn, "we'll all help to make them."

It was the method I adopted. We built up the heads of wire netting and papier mâché, and we used Winterborn's juju as model. We gummed on ringlets of red crepe hair for scalp and beard and the single eyebrow, and the effect was quite horrible. It was as if the juju had by some monstrous form of parthenogenesis sired, conceived and hatched out this pair of giant twins, a swollen and most sinister reduplication of itself.

The summer plays were performed in the open air when weather allowed, and sometimes when it didn't. Chairs were set out in the paddock in a wide semi-

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circle, whose pivot over the gently sloping lawn was a small pillared summerhouse like a Greek temple, towered over by great beech trees which provided canopy and sounding board for the actors. This corner of the paddock made a natural theatre, for the shrubberies that bordered the sunken Beech Walk offered any number of concealed paths for exit and entrance, and the garden temple had a timeless and diminutive elegance that allowed of its being a palace and a hovel, Toad Hall and Cyclops cave, in the same afternoon without strain on the imagination.

On the afternoon before the dress rehearsal, the actors assembled here for last adjustments to their costumes. Polyphemus was provided with a long scarlet cloak which hung from padded shoulder wings attached to the false head, and from a gap in whose tent-like folds Winterborn peeped beady-eyed as a gnome. He looked prodigious. Molly Sabine, who was stuffing out Mr. Toad's golfing jacket and adjusting his basket head with the popping tennis-ball eyes, gave a little scream when she turned at Winterborn's gobble to see the painted Cyclops towering above her.

"Goodness!" she cried, and turning to me in faint protest, "isn't it rather too horrid, James? You'll be giving the younger boys nightmares."

Winterborn was pleased.

"I scared Sabby almost out of her wits," he crowed from the folds of his cloak, "Dracula and Frankenstein are nothing on me. You'll have to have professional nurses and Red Cross men with stretchers to cart out flopping mothers on Prize Day."

"Come over here," I said, "and let me take off that head before your own is too swollen to allow it."

The costumes and heads were stored away in the summerhouse until the next day. Winterborn remained behind while I checked the properties and locked up: he was gabbling Latin all the time, as if to impress me with the fact that he was word perfect and could play the part backward if need be.

But, "Oh, Lord!" he said in English, as we were walking back over the lawn, "I've left Pollywolly doodle in there."

"Well, you say you're going to carry him under your cloak as a mascot tomorrow—so why can't he stay in there with the rest of the stuff?"

"It's only that I'd promised to lend him to Custance tonight. But it doesn't matter, sir. It'll do as well another day, I expect."

"What on earth does Custance want with him?"

"Well, it's funny what Sabby . . . what Matron said just now about nightmares. You see, if we sleep with him under our pillows we all get dreams."

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"You all get dreams—how do you mean?"

"We've tried it out. We dream about that ship, sir."

"Nonsense. You're making it up."

"At first I thought it might be just thinking about it—not real dreams. But we've all tried in our dormitory, and always it's about that beastly ship."

"You're probably all of you overexcited about Prize Day, and imagining things. Or stuffing too much contraband tuck into yourselves after 'lights out'—and paying for it in bad dreams. I'll get Matron to dose the nightmares out of you . . ."

"They're not exactly nightmares, sir, because of the excitement. It's dark and stuffy and there's singing down there: the timbers are creaking and we roll from side to side so that the chains clank together; and there's shouting in the dark, and over all this a sense of something going to happen. We compare notes and it's all the same except the suspense is growing more and more unbearable . . ."

"It's as well," I said, "that you've left your juju in the summerhouse. You need all the sleep you can get for the next two days—not to be lying awake to all hours telling yourselves horror stories."

"Oh we don't lie awake, sir. It's not till morning that we talk about . . . the ship and—what may happen next."

"Well forget about it until after Prize Day."

Preparatory schoolmasters, like the parents they act for, often listen with only half an ear when a boy is talking to them: the adult's and the child's worlds impinge but never interpenetrate. I have disinterred this conversation with Winterborn only after later events made it necessary that I should remember it. As it was, it became submerged and forgotten in the drift of routine duties almost as soon as he and I had reached the school buildings and gone our different ways.

No mother actually swooned on Prize Day though several confessed that they had found the Latin play disturbing. Winterborn, stirred by the congratulations of his schoolfellows after the dress rehearsal, excelled himself in the second performance. He looked superbly obscene: the little sandalled feet and thin ankles just showing under the hem of the scarlet cloak helped to exaggerate the deformity of the wide shoulders and clumsily swaying head; and the piping voice emerging from that top heavy frame was grotesque but by no means absurd. There was some nervous laughter when he spoke his first lines, but after that the audience came to accept his scratching treble as one of the more chilling deformities of the monster he portrayed. And when he staggered up-

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right between the pillars of the garden temple, with his terrible painted face streaked and smeared, like Duncan's grooms, with gouts of trickling scarlet he let himself go in a harsh strident scream, a pterodactyl gobbling that seemed to rip the membranes of the brain. It was an inhuman cry: one forgot the boy peeping through the slit of the cloak: it was the Cyclops himself who shrieked.

Parents were dismally impressed by that scream, so I gathered afterwards over tea on the lawns. But their sons told them it was *ace*, an *ace* shriek, super, wizard, the tops —and so extracted for Winterborn his meed of adult praise. Mothers making mental somersaults and reservations under a variety of fashionable hats were compelled to admit that the Latin play, and Polyphemus especially, and his scream above all, had been undeniably *ace*. But there were looks under the hats and the plucked eyebrows, faintly censorious looks such as Molly Sabine had flashed on me two days before, which suggested that the Latin play had certainly impressed parents, though not exactly in the way Roger Edlington had intended that it should. They preferred, I noticed, when their sons allowed it, to talk of *Toad of Toad Hall*, which had been all that they expected and had helped to dissolve in happy laughter the tensions Winterborn's performance had built up.

As is usual on these occasions there was a good deal of clearing up to be done after the last limousine had borne away the last two parents. Some of the older boys were allowed traditionally to stay up and help. The caterers were already stacking the crockery and the hired chairs, and a party of boys was put to loading these into the truck. School chairs were returned to the library and the various form rooms from which they had been borrowed. The paddock was a place of supposedly organised confusion from which I managed to extricate several of my actors for employment in the summerhouse, and in the several leafy 'green rooms' in the shrubberies. We gathered up the squashed tubes of greasepaint, eyebrow pencils, the spirit gum bottles gritty with little tufts of crepe hair, and restored them to the make-up box: wigs, costumes, animal heads and looking glasses were packed into laundry baskets in the summerhouse, and sent over to the linen room for eventual sorting and storage. The two great gory Cyclops heads, still tacky with paint, were left with the usual clutter in the Greek temple—the decaying tennis net, the dusty bundles of bamboo canes, the broken machine for marking out white lines, the tattered deck-chairs. Before locking I glanced round to make sure nothing had been forgotten. Something lay on one of the window ledges: it was Winterborn's juju.

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"Here," I said, "where's Winterborn? He's left his mascot behind."

"Oh, I'm taking it, sir," said Custance. "Winterborn asked me to look after it for him."

"Where is he? I've not seen him since the play, his play."

"I don't think he's feeling very well, sir."

"Has he gone up to bed?"

"No, sir. He's been sitting outside on the grass."

"All right. Have you got it? I'm locking up."

I paused between the Doric pillars. It was growing dusk, a nail-paring moon, planets and the bolder stars already embroidered a sky of palest blue satin. Among its trees the stucco house seemed luminous, a ghostly white against which the amber oblongs of a late-lit dormitory showed dark as bloodstains on a powdered spectre, I thought, like three of Banquo's twenty trenched gashes. A thin chill wind had got up with the thin moon. I recalled blinded Polyphemus swaying on that spot a few hours ago, gathering force for that terrific scream—and I shivered. Custance was already halfway across the lawn, swinging the juju like a knobkerry; and as I set off in his wake a figure moved from a bush on the edge of the rustling shrubberies to head him off.

"Hi, Custance! I was serious. You oughtn't to take him tonight."

"You promised me. You promised me two nights ago."

"But I warned you. He's in a shocking mood . . ."

"Oh rot, Winterborn. You imagined it. He's only painted wood. He couldn't have done what you said."

"Leave him downstairs—in your desk. Anywhere. Don't bring him into the dorm tonight . . . Here, let me have him."

There was a short breathless struggle, then a cry from Winterborn.

"There, I told you. He's bitten me."

Custance had broken free and was hopping over the lawn in a kind of war dance brandishing the juju.

"Utter rot and drivel!" he called back, over his shoulder. "You're both thick wood from the ankles upwards. You'd never have felt it."

Winterborn was sucking his finger when I came up with him.

"Hurt your hand, Winterborn?"

"He's got horrid sharp teeth. He drew blood when he bit."

"You mean you caught your finger in the thing's mouth when you were trying to snatch it from Custance just now."

"Perhaps that was it, sir. It's torn on both sides." He held up the injured finger to show the thin trickles of blood, "Like with thorns."

"You'd better bring it to Matron on your way to bed, and ask her to plaster it. Custance said you were not feeling well this afternoon."

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"I felt done in after the play, sir. But I'm all right now."

"It was a . . ." I chose my word, or perhaps the word chose itself for me, "a *shrieking* success, your performance this afternoon."

"That's what they all say, sir. Only . . . only I don't remember much about it after I was blinded, except I'm sure *I* didn't make that noise."

"What noise?"

"That shriek, sir—and the gobbling death-rattle noise that went with it."

"You certainly excelled yourself over that, Winterborn," I said, "and I think some people—Matron for instance—didn't care for it very much."

"I didn't myself, sir. You see, after Ulysses and his Greeks had smeared the pole over my eye and I pulled myself upright I got caught up in the folds of my cloak. I couldn't see a thing, sir: it was all dark stuffy red. I think I must have had stage-fright or something: I was afraid of making a giddy ass of myself, bashing my head off against the summerhouse pillars or tripping over the step. I had Pol . . . my juju you know, with me under the cloak; and as I was scrabbling with those beastly red folds for air and daylight to holler into . . . well . . . it sounds silly now, sir, and perhaps I was worked up and imagined it, but . . . I . . . nobody believes me, sir, but . . ."

"Go on, Winterborn. But what?"

"It seemed, sir, that that wooden image wriggled in my hands and then . . . *then he shrieked, sir,* the long harsh shriek with the gobbling in it . . . I dropped him like hot cakes and I heard him clatter on the summerhouse step and he seemed to writhe up like a snake and bite my ankle. That moment I managed to find the slit in the cloak, and there was the ring of faces and I knew where I was and when I had to spout more Latin. It was like when a nightmare turns into an ordinary dream, sir: I was relieved, but wanting to wake up in case something worse happened."

"If you ask me," I said, "this play's been rather a strain on you. When you got tangled up in your cloak you panicked, and you fancied what you tell me. You were carried away by the part, and perhaps you thought the first cry was too muffled, and when you got your face clear you prolonged it in that dreadful gobbling."

"Perhaps, sir. It's what I've tried to tell myself. It was sweaty under that cloak, and maybe the thing slipped in my hands. So I thought it wriggled and dropped it and it gashed my ankle."

"That's why you screamed so well. There was no need for acting that time. But now I'll take you along to Miss Sabine, and get that finger of yours looked to—and the ankle. And while she's about it, I'll ask her to give you a couple of aspi-

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rin. What you need tonight, dear boy, is sleep and lots of it."

"Well, I'm glad it's Custance and not me who's got him tonight," said Winterborn as we came to the school buildings.

In the weeks after Prize Day the weather became tropical. The days grew heavy with heat: it was as if the air had taken on the quality of metal, as though the earth were being covered with a golden mask like a Pharaoh dreaming himself dead, lying without stir yet alive in his own golden image. The trees stood carved and gilded, not a leaf moving: turf became tawny as desert sand.

It was impossible to get work done in the form-rooms; the boys sat at their desks flushed and listless, and their masters' voices had a soporific effect on them like the drone of insects. When I could, I took my classes in some shaded part of the paddock, but I cannot say that any great amount of work was done there either: my own voice certainly seemed to have a soporific effect on myself.

The only spot where we could achieve the illusion of being cool was in the swimming pool; and its waters, glared on all day by the sun, were almost at soup heat and far too full of floating or languidly flowing bodies. The staff could bathe after 'lights out', but it was like being dipped into warm oil and the little exertion even of floating made the night air seem the stickier when one emerged into it.

Sunset brought no relief from the heat but, so it seemed, an intensification of its discomforts. The nights were entirely windless; and there was furriness about the dark, an almost visible redness, that 'dark, stuffy red' which Winterborn had described when recalling his moment of panic as he struggled with the folds of his cloak. Sleep was long in coming and when it came, broken by strange dreams and sounds. Often there was sheet lightning on some horizon's edge and a rumbling of far off thunder. We were ringed by a threat of storms, but no storm broke.

To make matters worse, in the third week of the heatwave the swimming pool was put out of bounds by order of the school doctor. Several boys had been afflicted by a skin complaint—a kind of blind boil which Dr. Halliday fancied might be contagious and have had its origin in the open air pool. Certainly it did not respond to his treatment: penicillin injections I was told seemed only to make the swellings more inflamed. The pool was drained, but the contagion—if such it was—continued to spread.

The affected boys did not run a temperature and were allowed to attend school, their boils well concealed under a wadding of plaster and lint. I did not actually see one of these swellings until a more than

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usually torrid night when afflicted with a headache I had gone up to Molly Sabine's 'surgery' after lights out to beg aspirin and a soneril tablet, and Custance had looked in. He stood in his night things, blinking in the light.

"I think *I've* got the murrain now, Matron," he said. "There's a little bump on my chest."

"You'll be the seventh from that dormitory," said Molly. "Take off your dressing gown and let me look . . . Now the pyjama top, stupid . . . Yes, you have it all right."

There was an oval discoloration in the middle of the boy's chest—a round purple swelling like a marble, edged by an ovoid of yellowish crinkled skin.

"Are they all like that?" I asked.

"They all look the same," said Custance, "but Bradbury has his on his arm, and Felton's is on his stomach, and Winterborn's got a beauty bang on the collarbone, and . . ."

"Stand still," said Molly, as she dabbed the swelling with lint and lotion. "Does it hurt?"

"Well, it sort of throbs—but it doesn't hurt exactly."

"I'm putting a plaster on it, so that you won't scratch it. Come and see me in the morning."

"All right, Matron . . . Do *you* think," he added, "it's a mosquito bite?"

"It might be. You'll be off games, and you'll come up here for my morning and evening surgery."

"Custance," I asked, "what's been happening on that ship? Do you know?"

He looked at me wide-eyed:

"You know about the ship, sir?"

"Something. Something was going to happen, wasn't it?"

"Oh, we took the ship you know," he said airily, "and some we killed in the fighting and the rest we tied up in our own chains. Then there was a storm—Felton dreamt that bit, sir—and the ship was wrecked and broke up. When it was my turn there wasn't much. It was all thick forest, and fires were burning in a clearing—and there was a huge thing we dragged through the trees. The drums were beating like mad, and once or twice this thing—a sort of idol I thought—stumbled and crashed, and when this happened everyone wailed."

"You know what it was, though . . .?"

"It was night-time in my dream. I couldn't see much. I pulled with the others on the ropes."

"What on earth are you talking about?" asked Molly.

"Oh, just a serial story," I said, "that the boys in Custance's dormitory are telling one another."

"I'll tell you this, sir," Custance went on, "I wouldn't like to be them."

"Them?"

"The men we tied up. We brought them into the forest too, and . . ."

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"James, *please,*" said Molly, "it's time this boy was in bed . . . Now you go back to your dormitory, Custance, and try not to scratch."

"Oh, it's not itchy or anything. It's got a living feel, that's all—a kind of soft drumming like a bird's heart beat when you hold it in your fingers . . . Goodnight, Matron . . . Goodnight, sir."

When he was gone, I said:

"Dr. Halliday's baffled by those swellings, isn't he? What's he make of them?"

"He thinks they might be an insect bite of some kind."

"Do you?"

"I don't know. I've never seen anything like them before."

"I think I have," I said. "That boil thing on Custance's chest was like an eye—an eye with a cataract or semi-transparent lid over it . . . Are they all like that?"

"Yes, the same. Now you mention it I suppose they are roughly the shape of an eye."

"And has any boy had more than one of these swellings?"

"Come to think of it—no."

"Funny the outbreak should be mostly in the senior dormitories."

"That's what makes me think the doctor was wrong to stop swimming—but I suppose he knows what he's about . . . What by the way was that rather lurid tale Custance was trying to get out when I packed him off to bed?"

"I'm not sure. It has something to do with Winterborn's juju."

"*Oh,*" said Molly in exasperation, "they've been bringing the horrible thing into the dormitories. Once I actually found it in a boy's bed. I've told them that if ever I see the beastly thing in a dormitory again I'll confiscate it."

"How did they take that?"

"Oh, the usual muttering. But they understood I meant it."

"Molly," I said, "shall we wait half an hour or so and then raid the senior dormitories? I'd like to know who's got that juju tonight."

"They wouldn't dare . . . I left no doubt that I should confiscate it, *and* punish the boy responsible."

"Frankly I think you'll be able to confiscate it tonight."

Even half-way along the passage we could hear through the open doorway that the boys in Custance's dormitory were not yet asleep. We tiptoed the last few yards down the unlit passage, and stopped to listen to the excited murmuring within.

"I tell you it's true. If one dreams we all dream."

"You mean," it was Custance's voice, "that I'll dream now even if it's not with me."

"Yes, anyone who has the murrain mark: we seven and the others in the other dormitories."

"The same thing?"

"Always the same thing."

"Who has him tonight? It was Bradbury's turn."

"I've got him. Winterborn said it was all right."

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"Gosh, Felton. I wonder what we're really going to do with them."

"*You* know," someone giggled in the dark, "you know very well. Why have we been feeding them up for weeks, eh?"

Molly Sabine switched on the lights. There was a quick scuffling, the squeak of bed springs, and a deep stertorous breathing: not a head moved on its pillow.

"You were talking after Lights Out," Molly accused.

Nobody spoke or stirred.

"Bradbury," I said, "hand that Thing over to Matron."

He turned about blinking in the light, feigning the point of waking:

"What . . . *who* . . . what's that, sir?"

"The Thing in your bed—hand it over."

"In my bed, sir? . . . What d'you mean, sir! I've got nothing."

Something heavy clattered the same instant on the dormitory floorboards. The other boys decided to be woken by the clatter, but the pretence they put up was a poor one.

I picked up the juju from where it had fallen beside Bradbury's bed and took it over to Molly.

"Your prize," I said.

But Molly seemed as much in a huff with me as with the boys. She gave me one of her looks before turning its full blue fire on to the dormitory at large.

"Very well," she said, "you've all been talking after Lights Out and you are going to be punished. You know what I said about bringing this horrid dirty thing into the dormitory. Well, I shall ask Mr. Herrick to confiscate it for the rest of term. And Bradbury, I shall have you punished both for disobedience and for lying. Now if I catch anybody talking again tonight the whole dormitory will be sent to the Headmaster."

She switched out the lights and made a queenly exit—leaving deepest silence behind her.

"I do think, James," she said, when we reached her room, "that if you knew they were bringing that thing up here at night you should have told me."

"But I didn't know you'd banned it. And until this evening I thought it rather harmless. Do you want to keep it?"

"No, you look after it. And see that Winterborn doesn't have it back until the end of term. And, James . . ." she added with a smile that told me I was forgiven, the huff evaporated, and she her normal pretty self again, "*you* can take it to bed with you every night if you like."

I didn't like. I put it in my wardrobe and shut the door on it and locked it; but even then I dreamed. It was beastly hot and I was shackled hand and foot. A great fire burnt somewhere and sent grotesque shadows leaping like demons about the hut: the mud walls

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were crimsoned with its light, and I watched a large coppery scorpion climb above my head and hide itself in the roof thatch. A wailing interminable chant trod with the beat of the tom-toms thudding in my head. Trickles of sweat, tormenting as flies, ran down my head and felt their way across my face and into the corners of my eyes. Suddenly the clanging and the drumming ceased, and in the long silence that followed I struggled insanely to be rid of my fetters. A shrill terrible scream stabbed into my heart like a knife and I fell back on the hard mud floor: it was followed by a vast shuddering sigh, utterly obscene as if it issued from the mouth of Hell itself, from *all* the mouths in Hell. The chanting and the beating of the hand-drums started up again on a wilder note: it was accompanied by the stamp and shuffle of innumerable feet. Horror mounted with the tempo of the chant. Then a groaning body was thrust into the hut, tumbled over someone's legs and rolled against me on the floor. I glimpsed in the firelight the bloody mutilated face, and I awoke crying, *"The eyes! They have eaten Captain Zebulon's eyes."*

When I slept again the shadows had taken delirious shape: they stamped and leered around me, huge heads nodded above tiny painted bodies, tattooed and feathered legs whirled above my head. A woman daubed all over with yellow paint fell on her hands and elbows and stayed there, her breasts shaking and her mouth dripping foam: she snarled at me like a jackal, and twisted herself nearer. Someone in hyena skins knocked her aside and bent down to feed me from a painted calabash: I heard a voice in my ear whisper hoarsely, "Don't eat it. It's Zebulon," and I woke to a red and breathless dawn and the familiar drooping masses of the beech trees beyond my window.

I got up and dressed. I unlocked my wardrobe and took out the Cyclops juju, and for a while I stood by the window thinking what I should do with it. My room overlooked a part of the Beech Walk which here was at its closest approach to this wing of the house: the beech trees meandered away, and to the left one could see the paddock and the little temple they overhung. With the increasing light the horror of the night's dream grew more remote. My fearful suspicions of so short a while ago began to seem absurd. All the same I had no wish to share my room another night with this piece of crudely daubed iron wood I held like a sceptre in the crook of my arm. The stucco summerhouse my eyes had fixed on over the lawn answered the problem for me. The Greek temple should be Pollywolly doodle's shrine until the end of term.

Before anyone was up I took the

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key from the board outside the school office, let myself out by the side door and strode over the dewy and cobwebbed grass to the summerhouse. Here I hid Winterborn's juju in a roll of old netting, and locked him in. I felt a great sense of relief as I sauntered back to the school. He was safe where he was: let the mice and the spiders dream with him if he willed it. I felt very pleased with myself, and at the same time wonderfully conscious of my own absurdity.

It would have been better as things turned out, if I had obeyed my waking impulse, which was to bring the Cyclops juju down to the boiler room and incinerate him in the furnace.

Winterborn made a fuss about the confiscation of his god.

"Sir, it's not fair. I didn't know Bradbury was bringing him up to the dorm—honestly, sir. Can't I have him back if I promise he'll never be brought upstairs again?"

"Matron said you were to have him back at the end of term. Even if you persuade her to alter her mind about it my own's made up. He stays locked up for the rest of term."

"It's a rotten swiz, sir. It's my god. I didn't know Bradbury had borrowed it, the little tick . . . If he comes and tells you I knew nothing about it, won't you . . ."

"He said you lent it to him and the others confirmed it."

"The dirty liars! But, sir, can't I just look at him now and then and hold him?"

"No."

"Where are you keeping him, sir? He's not in your room."

"How do you know that, Winterborn?"

"Well. I . . . I didn't, I kind of guessed. But where *have* you put him, sir?"

"You can go on guessing."

Winterborn shut his eyes, and a look of infinite suffering came over him. He nudged close to me. There was a plaster bandage showing above the open V of his shirt, the lint slightly deranged so that I made out beneath it the black treacly glitter of the iodine ointment I supposed Molly Sabine had daubed on his sore.

"It's a rotten thing. It's just like slavery, this school," he murmured, his eyes still closed: he was pressing against me heavily so that for a moment I thought he was going to faint.

"What's wrong, Winterborn?" I asked, "are you ill?"

He opened his eyes then, and said:

"Sleepy . . . It's all right now, sir. He'll be all right. You'll let me have him on the last day?"

"On the last day."

For the next several nights I went on dreaming, but this I attributed rather to the heat than to the juju. My nightmares now seemed to consist of sounds, strange

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cries, wailing, a distant drumming. These sounds brought me awake with all my senses alert and alarmed—my eyes strained into the darkness, my hearing racked by the deceptions of that heavy silence, my breathing thin as wires controlling the pendulum swing of my heart. Before long I discovered that others had heard the noises I had fancied in my dreams.

"That bloody bird," Roger Edlington remarked over breakfast one morning, "did you hear it, James? It kept me awake half the night."

"Bird!" I said, "I've heard odd noises for several nights—but I couldn't identify them."

"I fancy one of Colonel Torkington's birds must have escaped from its cage. It was crying about the house for hours. At first I thought it a peacock, but it was a shriller cry and more prolonged. Some ghastly parrot, I'd say, or kookaburra."

"Colonel Torkington's aviaries are about five miles off," I said.

"I know. It's odd it should have flown here to roost. But it's the only way I can account for that shocking row last night. I'll telephone Torkington this morning and get him to send over one of his men to snare it."

Later in the morning I came across Roger in the library. He had two volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* on the table before him, and several books on birds.

"None of Torkington's birds is missing, James," he said. "One thing I'm certain of—last night's visitor was *not* an owl." He began turning over the pages of the encyclopaedia, thumbing for "kookaburra." "The trouble with these bird experts is that they're useless at describing intelligibly in print the cries birds make. Either they're vague and poetic, or they're musical and talk about 'limpid notes' and 'descending scales.' "

"I take it that last night's bird was neither vague, nor poetic, nor musical?"

"*It certainly was not!*" said Roger, looking grim as he bent to his study of the habits and call of the Laughing Jackass.

We sat up that night, and about one o'clock we heard a crying close to the house, a long harsh scream with a gobbling sound at the tail of it. Roger went out with a gun to stalk the creature by moonlight. He came back after twenty minutes to report failure.

"It's sly enough," he said, "for there wasn't a sound from the moment I let myself out of the house. I had a feeling of being watched all the time, though: it was rather uncanny."

Roger's excursion with the gun had succeeded at least in scaring the creature. Once or twice it called again, but remotely from some distant part of the playing fields or the woods.

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The following night I went to bed early and woke repeatedly, as was my recent custom, into profoundest silence. It must have been long after midnight that I was aroused by a knocking on my door and a shaking of the handle. I switched on my bedside lamp and called, "Yes . . . who is it?"

It was Molly Sabine in her dressing-gown and looking scared.

"James," she said, "there's no one in Senior Blue Dormitory. Their beds are empty. I looked into Yellow next door and there are only two boys sleeping there: the others are gone."

I pulled on my dressing-gown, shuffled into slippers and followed Molly's torch along the corridor.

The Blue dormitory was bright with the full moon, which shining through the tall, late eighteenth-century windows, cast oblongs of broken light on the floor and made alabaster tombslabs of the beds.

"They've sneaked back, Molly," I whispered, pointing to a bed by the door: for there was the little mound of a sleeping body under the quilt, the dark outline of a head on the pillow.

"Oh, they've taken their precautions," she said, and she pulled back coverlet and sheet.

A pillow punched into shape, a pair of stuffed stockings, a sponge bag for head and the sponge for hair: there was my sleeping boy. Molly shone her torch on the other pillows.

"The rest," she said, "are quite as ingenious. But where have they gone?"

"Look, Molly," I said, "will you make a list of the missing boys? I'll put on a few clothes and go and wake Roger. We must try and avoid waking the others."

The truants were all, with one exception, from the senior dormitories. Molly had found one bed dishevelled and empty in Junior Green dormitory:

"It's little Dickie Zuppinger," she reported, "and he's the only one who hasn't got it."

"Hasn't got *what?*" asked Roger, grumpy from interrupted sleep and the hasty assumption of responsibility.

"What they call 'the murrain'—those boils I've been treating."

"Do you mean all the other absentees have these boils?"

"The list I made out was exactly the same as my last night's surgery list—except for Zuppinger."

"Silly little asses!" said Roger, "I've noticed they're beastly proud of their blains. I suppose they're off on a beanfeast somewhere to celebrate their Mark of Cain. There'll be several more marks of cane of a very different sort to celebrate when I catch them."

We searched the place thoroughly, and the boys were not in the schoolbuildings. Roger found the key that led to the side door was missing from the keyboard.

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"And the key to the summerhouse?" I asked.

"I didn't notice . . . We'd better beat different sectors. I'll cut along past the swimming pool, look in the gym and work across the playing fields to the park. You take the other side. Move along the Beech Walk: they may be holding a feast in the shrubberies. If they're not there go on into the park, and up to the woods. If we both draw a blank, we'll meet by the Knoll where we build the bonfires. You have the torch. Got a whistle?"

"No."

"Here, take this one. I'll pick up another from my study. Blow the whistle like mad if they run for it."

The door of the summerhouse was ajar. I looked inside. The roll of netting and the Thing I had hidden in it were gone. The dusty little room seemed very empty, yawning with the vacancy of moonlight; and I stood a moment puzzling at this emptiness, before I recalled that when I had last been here the two great painted heads had gazed gorily on me from the now naked corners of bleached panelling the moonlight and my torch beam played on.

I moved into the shrubberies, flashing my torch into the glooms. There was no one about. I plunged down the bank into the sunken walk under the tunnel of beech trees. Moonlight gleamed fitfully here, filtering in long trickles through gaps in the foliage and lying in pools along the path and the bare-earth banks.

The Beech Walk led into the park and eventually thickened out into 'the Woods,' a copse or windshield along the northern edge of the park. As I approached the woods I saw the glow of a fire through the trees, and I began to set my features into the mould of sternness and severity which the circumstances seemed to demand even of a tyro schoolmaster.

I flicked off my torch, and moving away from the path, made a detour round that lurid point of fire so that I should come in from a side where the trees were thickest. The chanting of treble voices and the thudding of make-shift drums covered the sounds of my approach. Even when I emerged into the clearing where the fire blazed no one appeared to hear or to notice me.

There were about twenty of them, naked ash-daubed little boys squatting in a semi-circle about a bonfire. I was within ten yards of the fire, and I leant against a tree and pondered whether I should now blow a loud blast on my whistle and shout with terrible jocularity "Half Time!"

Most of those who squatted, swaying to their chant, had their backs to me; but facing me, withdrawn some way on higher ground the further side of the fire were *three* vast still figures. "They have

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made a third head," I told myself uneasily, "and they have repainted the faces of the other two." The drummers knelt either side of the Cyclops figures and were pounding away on a rusted oil drum and what appeared to be biscuit tins. On the rising ground between the fire and the three painted figures lay a long black object which at first I could not identify.

Very suddenly the chanting and the beating of drums stopped. There was a kind of sigh, like an echo of that obscene sighing in my dream only softer, and one of the painted cyclops swayed forward until it stood above that black thing on the ground. The black thing wriggled and gave a muffled cry. The cyclops raised a long stick whittled at one end to a point, sharp as a spearhead; and I yelled at the top of my voice "Drop it!" and ran out into the firelight. There was a long harsh shriek which broke into demoniac gobbling: the spear had jabbed wide of its mark and stuck quivering in the earth. The three cyclops figures turned and made off clumsily among the trees.

I had run through the semi-circle, skirted the fire and was moving over to that object on the ground when the utter silence of those children behind me made me turn to look on their faces.

They were asleep: asleep or perhaps in a trance. Most had their eyes closed, and those whose eyes were open stared straight before them with a dreadful sightless fixity. The firelight made the ointment on their sores glisten oddly.

I turned again to the upright spear and the thing that lay stretched beside it. For a nauseating instant I thought I was looking on a charred body: the next moment with infinite relief I had realised it was the old tennis net from the summerhouse pegged out over a stirring body. Through the blackness of the netting I made out two scared eyes, a tousle of fair hair and the torn strips of pillow linen with which the boy was bound and gagged.

"It's all right, Dickie," I cried, as I tore at the netting. "I'll have you out of this in a minute."

It was a long minute, and I was still tugging at the knots that held him when a second wooden spear fell short of us on the edge of the fire, sending up a flurry of sparks. I stood up and faced again the half-ring of sleepwalkers: they seemed frozen in the position in which I had last seen them, some with eyes closed, some staring straight ahead without a blink. Yet when I was stooping over the net a moment ago I had a strange feeling that many eyes were watching me. It was a situation I could not deal with alone. I blew on my whistle again and again, and was glad to hear a not too distant echo. A few of the boys round the fire woke up and began whimpering:

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"What's happening? . . . Is that Mr. Herrick? . . . Where are we? . . . Has there been an air-raid, sir?"

"It's all right," I said. "Squat down by the fire and keep warm, and try and keep awake. It's important, you understand. Don't let yourselves fall asleep again. Shake the others awake too."

But even as I shouted to guide Roger to the spot they had taken their places in the semi-circle and fallen asleep again. Little Zuppinger had gone off in a faint, and I stood guard over him until Roger came up.

"It's a kind of mass hypnosis," I told Roger. "Get them awake and keep them awake. There's a pile of pyjamas and dressing-gowns by the trees over there. If you can get them dressed, I'll round up the others. A few have wandered off into the woods."

They were not far off—three immense figures like giant toadstools under the trees. One jabbed at me with a pointed stick, but I caught at the thin wrist and shook him: the painted head tumbled off his shoulders, and disclosed Felton, blinking, coming to life:

"What's wrong, sir? . . . What's up? What are we doing here, sir?"

The other two cyclops were shambling off among the trees. I caught the nearest by the arm as he made off after his fellow, pulled off the false head and Bradbury began to wail.

"What on earth, sir? . . . Hi, Felton you've nothing on! What are we doing in the woods?"

I pulled them both out into the firelight, and handed them over to Roger who was marshalling his group into dressing-gowns.

"Ah, Felton and Bradbury!" he said. "Well that's the lot, James."

"There's another in the woods," I said. "I'll bring him in."

"But all the missing boys are now here. I've taken a roll-call. You must help me get them back to school. Zuppinger will have to be carried."

It was nearing dawn by the time we had got them back to school and to their dormitories. The doctor was sent for, and Roger and Roger's wife Pamela and Molly Sabine watched by their beds.

I had told Roger what I guessed at, and I added "I'm certain one of them got away into the woods."

"But we've checked them all in, James. There's no one missing . . . Oh, I do wish the doctor would hurry. I suppose it was a kind of auto-suggestion; as you say, a sort of mass hysteria or hysterically induced hypnosis," and he added wearily, "I think I must have been caught up in it too. Do you know that as we were bringing them back I . . . I actually thought that the swelling on Winterborn's neck was an eye. He was stumbling along with his eyes closed, and for an instant I fancied he was looking at

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me out of his throat. Absurd. But it's been an exhausting night."

"Do you want me to stay on guard here?"

"No. There are enough of us here. It won't be long, I expect, before Dr. Halliday arrives. You go along and get some sleep."

"I'm going out into the park," I said, "to see if anything has been left behind. And I'll borrow your gun if I may."

The air was very close as I walked over the park. The storm that had held off for weeks was approaching at last. Thunder rumbled over the woods, and lightning seemed to make the trees leap forward to meet me. But in the east the sky was growing paler.

My excursion with the gun, like Roger's earlier one, was a failure. Once I seemed to hear a harsh scream in a clump of trees in the centre of the park, but when I approached it there was nothing to be seen. And then after a long barrage of thunder and a fantastic scrawl of lightning in the north I thought I heard the cyclops scream out of the woods. By the time I had reached the clearing in the woods the darkness had lifted and there was no longer need of my torch. I beat the woods in a widening circle round the bonfire clearing, and after twenty minutes I had come upon the Cyclops juju.

He was shrunk to his familiar size, fallen among brambles on the boundary of the woods. I picked him up and carried him to the still blazing fire. He tried to cling to my hand with his teeth, but I shook him off and flung him into the glowing heart of the bonfire. There was a wild flurry of sparks, and a grating shriek. He writhed an instant among the white hot timber, and I took up one of the wooden spears to poke him back should he manage to wriggle clear of the fire. It was soon over. I watched him burn until he was an incandescent cinder, and I thrust at this cinder with the spear until it broke up into ash.

I got back to the school building just before the rain began in earnest. A few giant drops spattered me as I ran across the paddock; and as I let myself in at the side-door the deluge set in with a roar.

In the hall I met Dr. Halliday coming downstairs with Roger Edlington.

"Wonderful!" the doctor was saying. "They've all cleared up quite miraculously. Not a mark to be seen except for the little fellow who hurt his tongue, and I don't believe he had any swelling, did he? . . . It's wonderful what penicillin will do."

None of the boys involved remembered anything of that night. I might have fancied, like Roger, that I had been caught up in a mass hypnosis—if later events had not supplied a postscript to the tale. In

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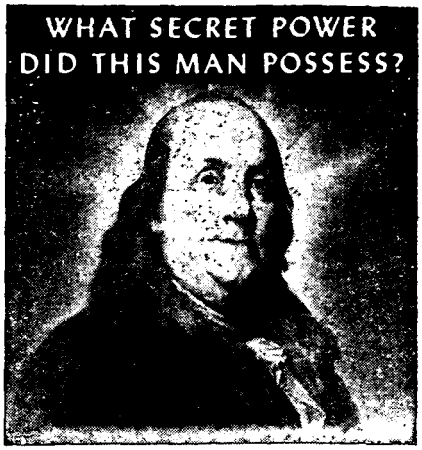
the war my troopship was torpedoed in mid-Atlantic, and survivors were put ashore in a foetid harbour town on the West African coast to await the arrival of another convoy. I spent several days there, and in the course of these I found my way into the local museum. In a corner of the Tussaud-styled 'Hall of Ethnology' there towered grim and immense the original of Winterborn's juju. At its feet a printed card explained that this figurehead of a wrecked sailing ship had been for over a hundred years the tribal god of the Walupa people. The Walupas, so I was told by a bar-stool acquaintance, were once notorious cannibals: and "probably" he added, "still are. A friend of mine, a policeman got on to a case a few years before the war. There was a Walupa witchdoctor . . ." So I heard again of the raid in which Winterborn's juju was discovered. The details of that raid and of the things discovered in the hut were enough to give authenticity to my story; but I didn't tell it just then. It was hardly a bar-room tale.



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(A Rosicrucian)

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William Sambrot is a full-time free lancer with well over two hundred published short stories—many in the SF and fantasy field —in such publications as the Post, Playboy, Cosmopolitan, Argosy; *he has also written for TV: for Combat, Alfred Hitchcock, Outer Limits, among others. West Africa is the scene of Mr. Sambrot's first story for us. It concerns the export of a bit of American know-how in the form of four Peace Corps dragon slayers. There are formidable dragons in West Africa . . .*

NIGHT OF THE LEOPARD

by William Sambrot

THE TROUBLE STARTED THE moment we set foot inside the village of Koluma.

There were four of us, members of the Peace Corps, who'd been sent to the new African nation of Sierra Leone: Jacob Tannenbaum, a bearded pre-med from NYU; an expert oboe player, jazzophile with a complete catalogue of everything Thelonius Monk had ever done. There was Michael Fallon from Oregon State, a B.A. in Forestry; redhead, freckled, a dead-ringer for a youthful Arthur Godfrey. There was Eunice Gantly, a B.A. in Sociology, a beautiful Negro girl born in Oakland, California, a grad of U.C., at Berkeley.

And lastly, there was myself, Bob Metzger, with an M.A. in Math, if you please, and fully aware I'd never use any part of it in the village of Koluma, deep in an indigenous rain forest near the Guinean-Liberian border. Kono-tribe territory. Far beyond the rail-head, where primitive Africa really took over. Bush country.

We knew, as well as six weeks' briefing could tell us, just what we were getting into. We knew that Koluma lay in the heart of a country of festering swamps, plateaus, and remnants of immense rain forests. A country where rain exceeded ten feet—when it rained. A country where children have one chance in four of living to maturity. Where the women begin ag-

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ing at fourteen and die of unremitting childbirth and labor before they're forty. Where trachoma, frambesia, elephantiasis and the tsetse fly are the norm. Where the tribal chiefs still exercise feudal life or death power.

A breathtakingly beautiful country, where the superstitions of a thousand generations hold the natives in unbreakable thrall: where they fear to walk the forest at night because God is a leopard who eats their souls and mangles their bodies—and the witch doctor his earthly representative. Only he roamed the night—in many forms.

The witch doctor. They didn't tell us much about him, at the briefings, back at the big clean U.C. campus in Berkeley. But we learned of him in a hurry—and his power—the hard way, the moment we stepped foot in Koluma.

In Sefadue, the last town of any size before hitting the bush country, we were met by Father Everett, a Maryknoll priest. An American, he ran a tiny mission not far from Koluma. He'd spent thirty years in the bush, struggling to bring a ray of light into the primeval darkness of that area. A lean, gentle-eyed man, he and his grizzled old Negro assistant, Job, had walked out of the bush to volunteer us his services.

He smiled, shaking our hands, and holding Eunice's hands in both his for a long time, he studied her intently. "You have strength," he told her. "Do you know, I believe you sprang from a Nilotic-Hamitic ancestry. I'd almost swear —Masai."

She laughed, her deep throaty laugh, her brilliant eyes sparkling. "Straight Mississippi, Father," she said. "For over two hundred years, now."

"I meant—before that," he said gently. "They know the lions of Africa—the Masai—even here," he said. His sunken eyes probed our faces, measuring our bodies. "You are beautiful souls," he said. "I've forgotten how wonderful a young healthy body can be. You've all had your shots; you know about the malaria here?"

We groaned in unison, and Father Everett smiled his brief melancholy smile. Job helped us with our gear; we had a miniature caravan of two used but serviceable jeeps, piled high with our possessions—two years' worth.

Job was aptly named; he suffered every imaginable woe and pain, but worked indefatigably; meanwhile keeping up a stream of conversation in a broad if broken English accent. Sierra Leone was for many years a British protectorate; many of the colony natives speak a passable brand of English. Others use pidgin only. In the bush country, they speak their own language.

We moved out, heading northeast, through vast open savannahs, still thick with game; over burnt-

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out grasslands, moving up and east, through second-growth bush country, and finally, plunging into the indigenous rain forest which extended from here hundreds of miles east into Guinea and Liberia.

Narrow trails, barely wide enough for the jeeps, were our only roads. This was truly primitive country. And as we bumped along, Father Everett told us what to expect in Koluma.

"The first person you must meet in your village will be Oturu—he's the chief and the village medicine-man."

"The local witch doctor?" I smiled.

He gave me a sharp look. "He's the reason I wanted to meet you—to prepare you for him." He spoke seriously. "Don't make the mistake of under-rating him. He's of the Mende tribe; he's been to school in Freetown and speaks excellent English. But juju—magic—is his real business. His villagers fear his powers with a superstitious awe—and he works on their fears ruthlessly. The man's an utter despot."

We stared at him, somewhat skeptically, and he said, "He's very opposed to your coming—and you can understand why. You represent another kind of magic—one which could topple him. So I strongly urge you to do nothing which could give him reason to—to harm you—or your cause."

"He's what's wrong with Africa," Eunice said hotly. "He's educated; he knows what he's doing is detrimental to his own people. He's a common crook, sponging off their superstitious fears, keeping them in abject misery and ignorance for his own gain." Her dark eyes flashed. "He's despicable. You can bet your bottom buck I'll do everything I can to topple him."

Father Everett seemed distressed at her outburst. "You don't understand," he said. "His powers are real—very real. He—" he glanced toward Job in the next jeep "—he's rumored to be a ranking chief of the Tongo Players—an outlawed group. Human leopards. To even mention them is tabu to the natives. To see one after dark means death to them—and many have died that way—mauled and torn to bits."

Eunice looked askance. "You sound as though you believe that rubbish, Father."

He hesitated, looking troubled. "It's not important what I believe," he told her. "I—I'm white, from a different world. What is important is that these people do believe, and with an unshaken belief rooted in time immemorial. *They believe*—and so things happen to them which go beyond explanation."

He told us, as the jeeps bumped along and shadows lengthened, how their entire lives were ruled from birth to death by the makers of medicine—good or bad. Their unshakable belief in the powers of

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the witch doctor: that he could wither an eye, an arm, or even stop their hearts from beating, if they incurred his displeasure.

Father Everett told us of the natives' belief in black magic; how evil ones could lie in their huts at night, while their spirit rose to fly great distances. Of their terror of these evil ones who had the power to change their forms, to become alligators, baboons, and, most feared, leopards. Roaming the night, feasting on human victims.

We reached Koluma as the low-slanting rays of the sun pierced the tall trees. It was a scattering of huts underneath the gigantic flower-hung trees, like an open sewer in the midst of paradise. The smell was overpowering, and for the first time I realized the seriousness of the job we'd so blithely undertaken six weeks ago.

Every inch of ground about the huts was piled with offal, crawling with maggots, swarming with flies. Scrawny pigs rooted in the garbage, tick-infested chickens pecked and scurried underfoot. Flea-ridden curs snarled and yapped over tidbits, while everywhere the children tumbled, picking up dirt-encrusted scraps, eating them with apparent relish. Children with swollen stomachs, rickety legs, open sores, running diseased eyes. Ribs showing, teeth missing. Mothers, barely in their teens with breasts already withered, dangling grotesquely. Men stood about on one leg, the other cocked up against their inner knee, like meditative storks, gaping lackadaisically, the soles of their feet pitted with yaws.

We gazed about, silent. There were tears in Eunice's eyes.

The Jeeps stopped before a great Yairi tree. Underneath the tree was a crudely carved image of a pot-bellied creature with the head of an animal, but the arms and legs of a human. Cruel claws extended from the fingers and toes of the idol, and a long tail drooped behind it.

Flies buzzed blackly about the image, and piled up before it were putrid bits of flesh, decayed vegetables, fish-heads and spoiled fruit. From the tree dangled bits of glass and metal—obviously offerings to the village deity.

"That would be his obeah," Eunice said bitterly.

"The leopard god," Father Everett said. "And that hut next to it belongs to Oturu, the witch doctor."

We got out of the jeeps, and, as we moved toward Oturu's hut, I noticed the villagers remained at a distance instead of swarming around as we'd expected. I looked at Father Everett. "They don't seem very glad to see us, Father."

He nodded shortly. "They're not."

A man stepped out of the large hut near the obeah. "Oturu," Father Everett murmured.

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He was tall, and strongly built, lighter than the others—nearly as light as Eunice. He came close and I saw then how really big he was. I'm six two and he towered a good half foot over me. He approached us, and at a curt word from him the villagers who'd surged forward, now faded back respectfully.

He was dressed plainly, in sun-faded khaki shorts, a sleeveless cotton shirt, his long muscular arms bulging the armholes. A cord around his neck held two curving yellowish tusks—the incisors of a great cat. He radiated controlled power. His eyes glittered as he raked us with a keen glance, lingering longest on Eunice.

We stared at him, fascinated. Eunice had cool disdain on her face—but—I saw the flickering in her eyes; a brief hint of fear she suppressed immediately.

Father Everett said something, obviously ceremonious, in a slow guttural tongue, but Oturu gave him a cold look of thinly concealed hatred, cutting him short with a burst of harsh language. His voice was deep, vibrant with power.

"What does he say?" Eunice asked.

Oturu looked at her, and his eyes burned. "I told the white father that I've thrown the bones," Oturu said in an incongruous British accent.

"A form of divination," Father Everett said, "which shows your presence here is not welcome."

"The bones say there will be much sorrow to the people if these Americans remain here," Oturu said.

Eunice laughed aloud, a hard ringing contemptuous sound. The villagers murmured, drawing closer.

"I can understand how our presence here might be bad medicine for you—but it can only bring good for these people." She put her slim hands on her hips. "We're here at the request of the government in Freetown. We have their invitation in writing to settle in here, to live with the people and aid them in any way we can." She leaned forward, eyes snapping. "We didn't come seven thousand miles just to go back because your bones say we're bad medicine."

Oturu's thick brows drew together, but his voice was controlled as he rumbled, "I have no more to say. The bones never lie. If you stay, the wrath of our grandfather, the leopard, will be terrible."

"I do not fear your leopard," Eunice said, projecting her voice so that those in the crowd who might understand English would certainly hear her. She whirled, took a lipstick from her pocket and with two rapid strokes she drew a brilliant red cross on the protruding pot-belly of the obeah. The villagers, watching intently, gave a gasp and fell back.

Eunice turned to face them, her

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aristocratic features boldly challenging. "Since when does the daughter of the lion fear the leopard?" She threw off her jacket and stood before the obeah, tall, strikingly beautiful, and I saw Father Everett bow his head. An excited rumble passed among the villagers.

Oturu impaled Eunice with eyes that seemed suddenly dusty. She shrank back imperceptibly, but returned his look bravely.

"Now there will be many souls eaten," he said. "Theirs—" he gestured toward the villagers "—and yours." He stalked back into his hut.

Seconds later the villagers had melted from sight; only the pigs grunted on the little square. Even the curs had slunk away as though scenting a brewing storm.

That night, we sat around the small fire, while the wind moaned in the towering trees. Before the obeah, the bits of metal and glass jangled. And suddenly the dim paleolithilic figure of Oturu loomed there. In the flickering light, he seemed to be carrying a large stick, or club, draped with fur, and a small bag that rattled. He pointed the stick in the direction of the hut Eunice occupied alone, and his harsh gutturals were faintly audible to us.

He bent over the miniature altar before the obeah, stamping his feet, gesturing, rattling his bag. When Oturu was through, he walked away, and suddenly, from the depths of the dark forest, we heard the weird coughing grunt of some animal.

"Leopard," Job whispered.

Father Everett rose and walked quickly to the obeah. We saw him take something from the little altar. When he returned, his face was like carved stone in the firelight.

"What was that all about?" Tannenbaum asked uneasily.

Father Everett held up a small object. "It is evil," he said, after a long moment. "A juju—an offering of a soul to placate the leopard god."

We studied the object. It was a crude doll-like figure, with tiny curved thorns, like miniature claws, piercing the eyes, the heart, and the loins. The molded clay face was unmistakable.

"Eunice," I said.

"Yes," Father Everett said. Abruptly he tossed the object into the fire, and strode toward Eunice's hut. He knocked, and in a moment, vanished inside.

And finally, Tannenbaum, the pre-med (here, in this remote rain forest, his beard dark against his white face, NYU another planet, almost), Tannenbaum suddenly rose, kicked angrily at a log lying askew, and went into our hut. A few moments later his battery-operated phonograph began booming out, a swinging Thelonious Monk bit; chaotic, richly melodic, as only the Monk can play—but

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somehow right, here with the stars obscured by immense trees, bending close, the strange scents and sounds of the African forest. Here, after all, was the genesis of such music. And it, too, was a form of magic—but good magic.

The next morning Father Everett left us, clasping us each in a brief warm hug. And it was after he'd gone that I saw Eunice was wearing a heavy silver crucifix against her honey-colored neck. There were shadows under her eyes.

The villagers avoided us that day, although we began the first of the many simple, easily-imitated improvements we'd planned for the village—a deep, wide, sheltered latrine, with a pile of soft loose earth and hand-carved paddle-shaped shovels with which to throw loose dirt into the latrines after use. Primitive, but effective, sanitary cover.

For the next two nights, although we watched until long into the night, we spotted no one under the Yairi tree—but found each morning another crude figure of Eunice, pierced with thorn-claws. And daily, Eunice, strained-looking, moved about among the women, observing their way of life, saying nothing, aware that they were waiting to see the outcome of her clash of wills with Oturu. Her crucifix, like a magnet, drew their frightened glances.

But Tannenbaum got the first breakthrough. Or rather, Thelonious Monk, with an assist from Lester Young and Charlie "Bird" Parker. On the third day, with still no souls having been eaten, the villagers relaxed their attitudes. Tannenbaum drew a sizeable collection of thoughtful appreciative listeners to his canned jazz concert.

One old man in particular, with an open running sore on his wizened leg, hopped about and clapped in rhythm. His ulcerated leg was plastered with a disgusting poultice of ground-up bones, mud, spittle and other unmentionables, liberally sprinkled with flies.

Tannenbaum, emerging from changing records, saw the old man and beckoned for him to come closer. Cautiously, the oldster came nearer, and Tannenbaum looked at the leg. He shook his head gravely, then pushed the old man onto a log and stretched the leg out. The old man cast an anxious glance toward Oturu's hut, but when Tannenbaum began cleaning the ulcer, the old man submitted quietly. I saw he was looking over Tannenbaum's shoulder. I turned. Eunice stood there, smiling, the heavy silver crucifix at her neck winking softly.

That night the wind arose again; the moon, nearly full, scudded from tree to tree. And even though I waited up for hours, peering toward the obeah, I didn't see Oturu—or anyone else. But later,

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much later, we heard the wild screams from the deep woods, just beyond the village.

And in the morning, the body of the old man Tannenbaum had treated was found, on the edge of the deep forest. It was terribly mutilated and mauled, apparently by a leopard. The leg that had been neatly bandaged was torn completely off.

All that day, the villagers stayed in their huts; the body of the old man, straw-shrouded, lay before the obeah. Oturu was not to be seen. We prowled the forest outside the village area, rifles ready, but to our untrained eyes, nothing was visible.

That night, as quietly as he'd left, Father Everett returned, slipping into the village with Job, his assistant. He went directly to Oturu's hut.

We were waiting for him, when he came out, but he gestured for us to wait, and he went into Eunice's hut. He was there a long time, and when he came out, his face was grave; and pale.

"Oturu says the old one's soul was eaten by the leopard god for submitting to the white man's magic." He ran a tired hand over his face. "Of course there'll be more of this unless Eunice—and you—leave. That bit of information was revealed to him by his faithful bones."

"But—we just can't walk out on these people now," I protested. "There must be something we can do to stop this."

He meditatively fingered the heavy black crucifix he wore, then he said in a low voice, "Job tells me that the tracks of an enormous leopard lead from the scene of the kill into the village—and disappear. The villagers know this and they're in mortal terror, poor souls. They say it's a spirit-leopard."

We looked at one another. "Listen," I said urgently, "I'm a damned good shot, if I do say so—I made expert in the Marine Corps. I don't know too much about them, but don't leopards always come back to their kill? Let's buy a goat or a pig from someone here, kill it and put it in the same spot. I'll get up a tree with my big flashlight, and—"

Father Everett shook his head. "This leopard will never be caught that way." He stopped and looked beyond us.

We turned. Eunice stood in the doorway of her hut, and I saw again how terribly drawn and exhausted she looked. I noticed for the first time she wasn't wearing her silver crucifix. Her neck looked oddly vulnerable, without it. She nodded slowly to Father Everett.

He took a deep breath. "I'll need one of your rifle bullets," he said to me. "You have a good flashlight?" I nodded. He turned to Fallon and Tannenbaum. "Tonight, please stay in your huts—no matter what you might hear in

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Eunice's hut—or elsewhere. This is a job for just two of us." He was very sad, and solemn when he said, "Nothing must be done to frighten the—the leopard off."

I brought him one of my .375 magnum bullets—300 grains of killing power, and he tucked it into his palm, not looking at it. He said to me, "Stay away from Eunice's hut. I'll come for you—and your rifle—the back way. Until then—God be with you." He walked away and went into Eunice's hut. In a few minutes we heard muffled tapping sounds. Nothing else . . .

Father Everett and I crouched beyond the obeah, down the twisting trail that led into the rain forest, near the spot where the old man had been so cruelly killed. We stood motionless behind the smooth bole of an immense Yairi tree while the brilliant moon dappled the forest floor, and shadows swam like underwater images. We waited, looking not toward the forest—but back, toward the village.

Earlier, Father Everett had tapped at the back of our hut and whispered for me to follow. I'd gone out the tiny rear window, wiggling carefully, handing out my rifle and flashlight. I heard a click as Father slid back the bolt and slipped in a bullet, then he rammed it home. And afterward, we'd made our way in a circle, skirting the entire village, to take up our place on the forest edge.

We waited. The jungle roared; and suddenly, all sound stopped. There came a rending noise from the village and Father Everett gripped my arm. I sensed he was shifting the flashlight, bringing it up, ready to snap on.

I waited tensely, blood pounding in my head, and then we heard it, a yeowrring, a coughing grunt or two, and the sound of soft scuffling, as though some large creatures were rolling in the leaves. More sounds, and then the eyes, glowing, greenish—two pairs of eyes.

Abruptly the flashlight was a blazing beacon, and Father Everett was roaring in my ears, "The big one. The big one. *Shoot now, for the love of Jesus Christ!*"

Two leopards crouched there, transfixed in the bright light, enormous, their pelts glowing softly, the huge spots brilliant in the beam, feral eyes like nothing I've ever dreamed in my worst nightmares, unblinking, wide, glaring. And the immense male, mouth wide open, huge incisors glistening wetly, red tongue lolling out, lips drawn back in a sneer.

It coughed, crouched; I brought the rifle up and without conscious aim fired. The heavy recoil jarred me back. In that same instant the great leopard gave a scream that could only have been human, reared back, crashed down, thrashed around, coughing, yowling, snapping in ferocious rage.

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The smaller leopard spun, bounded away, and the light was snapped off. We stood there, blinking, blinded, while the awful snapping coughing sounds continued, as the animal fought to live. And finally, a grunt, a sigh, a diminishing sound of thrashing—a thump—and stillness. And from beyond, in the direction of the village, a terrible scream, shrill, high, impossibly higher, then it died.

The light came on again and Father Everett went crashing back down the trail. I followed him, gun at the ready. When I reached the clearing, near the obeah, I found Father Everett kneeling on the ground, holding Eunice in his arms. Her rich skin was an unbelievable ivory, her eyes rolled completely back in her head.

"Take her back to her hut. Whiskey, if you have it," he said hastily. "Circulation. Rub her well." He stood up and made a quick little gesture over her with his hand—the sign of the cross. Then he rushed off back down the trail, still carrying my flashlight.

I picked her up—she was surprisingly light for such a tall girl, and staggered back with her to her hut. Nothing moved in the village. I put her down on her pallet and bustled about, getting her some medicinal alcohol, trying to pour some down her throat. She coughed, opened dull eyes, obviously deep in shock, and while I rubbed her, she talked.

"It was just like the other three times I told you about, Father," she whispered, looking at me with glazed eyes, thinking I was Father Everett. "That tugging, that feeling that I must go—must go. But before—I had the crucifix, and I resisted. This time— This time —" She closed her eyes and her voice went on, while I listened, horror chilling me, despite the heat and humidity:

She had awakened (Eunice murmured, while I rubbed her wrists and massaged her shoulders) aware that the full moon was shining through the little window. The hot heavy night of Africa swept over her, full of sounds, voluptuous scents. She stretched deliciously and glided off the bed and to the window. *He* was out there, on the edge of the forest, calling her—calling her.

With a sudden unpremeditated movement she lunged at the small opening. It burst open with a rending of rotten wood and in an instant she was outside, looking back at the small hut, bathed in the flood of cold pearly moonlight. Somewhere beyond the village, in the velvet blackness, an animal coughed, a sound she instantly recognized.

There in the trees she saw the green eyes glowing at her, the slow gentle twitching of a long powerful tail, then the sinuous step by step of an immense leopard approaching.

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She waited, watching this great soft-stepping creature that came nearer and nearer. She felt no fear; no surprise to note that she had claws, that she was on all fours, and enfolded in rich spotted fur. No surprise at all. She looked deeply into the eyes of the huge male leopard and she knew him.

He was next to her, rubbing his muzzle against her shoulder, breathing softly in her ear. He became more insistent, and suddenly angered, she crouched on her haunches and brought up a paw in a quick slashing motion to the leopard's muzzle. Her claws raked down one side from ear to shoulder in a lightning gesture. The leopard yeowrred with pain, bounding back.

But in an instant it was next to her again, rubbing against her, oblivious of the bright red steak of blood that marred its stunning spotted fur. She purred, a deep soft rumbling sound, half acceptance, half warning. They turned, and shoulder to shoulder, heads swinging right and left, accepting the fact that they were creatures of the night, and supreme; that soft things awaited them to be torn and rendered, with salty blood theirs for the taking—together they ambled into the dark forest.

"And then—and then," her eyes opened, Eunice winced, clutched at me, fell back, her hands squeezing at her forehead. "There was a light, a bright light. And a sound—a voice, a terrible roaring voice—And I ran. I ran—and it hit me—it hit me—" She wrenched out from under my hands, clasping her breasts, gasping with great pain.

"I woke up," she panted. "And—it must have been the dream again—only, it was so real. And I was—I was outside." She got up on an elbow, peering at me, puzzled.

"Bob? I thought— Father Everett?" She looked around, and at that moment the brilliant beam of my flashlight came into the room. She sat up, terror glared from her eyes as she looked into it. She fumbled at her neck, feeling for her missing crucifix, and the beam snapped off.

"It's all right, Eunice." Father Everett stooped over her, bringing with him the scent of incense, of forest mold—and of fresh blood. "You've just had a terrible nightmare—you mustn't worry. It's over."

"That dream—the one I told you about—it came again, Father," she murmured, suddenly sleepy. "I thought—" She was asleep, then, making little gasping sounds as she breathed.

"I'll need your help for just a little bit more, Bob," Father said to me, taking my arm. I reached for my rifle but he restrained me. "You won't need that—not anymore."

We went back down the twisted trail, the bright beam of the light

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picking out huge flowers, pallid, unnatural looking. We were silent until we approached the spot where I'd shot the animal.

"Is it dead?" I said, although I knew it was.

"Yes," he said grimly, "the beast is dead."

It was lying up against the bole of a tree, the eyes half open, glittering in the flashlight, and then my heart gave a fearful leap; the hairs on my neck stood up and I shivered with a terrible chill. It was no leopard lying there, blood still oozing from a big hole in the chest where that 300 grains had gone in and expanded inside. It was Oturu.

He lay there, lips skinned back in a death grin. He was wearing a magnificent leopard skin, the head of the animal just behind his own, the great mouth open, yellow incisors gleaming wickedly, a red tongue, stiff, lolling out. The forelegs of the animal had been tied to his own arms, and the animal's leg skins tied to his own legs; the claws dangling, menacing, needle-sharp. The long tail coiled behind, lifelike, seeming still to twitch.

"My God—it's impossible. I couldn't have made that kind of a mistake. It was a *leopard* I shot. Not a man in a skin. I saw it—them. Two of them. A big leopard and—and—" I stopped. I looked at Father Everett. He was holding his heavy crucifix again, and I noticed there was blood on his robes.

"That dream—Eunice told me about her dream. But it wasn't a dream, was it Father? It was real. *She was the other leopard.* Oh God! How can it be?"

He held the light away from us, and his grave face, peaceful now, was reflected strongly in the subdued rays. He looked at something he held in his hand, something curiously flattened and battered that reflected the flash beam.

"You can choose to believe one of two things, Bob: That you were a prime participant in a struggle between the forces of light and the dark forces of evil that still bind Africa with chains so powerful they can reach back over two hundred years—to a girl born in America, of undiluted African blood." His hand clenched tight around the misshapen object. "A girl so courageous—so filled with love, she was willing to risk her immortal soul to help break those chains."

He looked piercingly at me. "Or—you can believe that what happened here tonight was all a ghastly but perfectly understandable mistake." He cleared his throat. "After all, an old villager *was* mauled and killed hereabouts by a leopard last night. We *were* hunting it—and Oturu had the bad luck to be prowling in the immediate area—wearing an outlawed leopard skin—at night."

"But—the other leopard. There were two of them—"

"Call it—coincidence," he said

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softly. He put a hand on my shoulder. "Whatever you choose to believe, only remember this and be comforted: a great evil has been eradicated here and a village set on a path that leads only one way—upward, out of primeval darkness."

"I—I don't know what to believe, Father. I'm only sure of one thing—this is Oturu's body. He's dead—and I shot him." I looked down at Oturu, grinning starkly in death. "The villagers believed he was invulnerable."

"Only against the common forms of death," Father said. "They also believe that when their witch doctor is out in the spirit, a stronger spirit can kill him—using certain magic amulets—a silver bullet, for example."

I started, and then reached for the dully gleaming lump of metal he was holding. I examined it closely. It wasn't the remnants of an ordinary .375 magnum bullet.

"It's silver, isn't it?" I stared at him. He nodded. I remembered the tapping sounds that came from Eunice's hut earlier in the night, and suddenly I had the complete picture. "This was Eunice's crucifix—the one you gave her that first night."

"Yes," he said, "her one protection against the beast. She gave it to me to use. Offering herself as the lure." He rolled it in his fingers. "But it can be recast. When the villagers learn what happened here tonight they'll expect Eunice to be wearing it again. For their sakes, I hope she will: They need her kind of magic."

He tucked the battered silver bullet into a pocket, then said, "We'd better get started carrying the body back. It's best to put it in his hut before daybreak—for various reasons."

I nodded and stooped to take Oturu's shoulders, and I saw the still-glistening blood on a long thin curving scratch down the side of his face and neck, continuing down onto the dark skin of his broad shoulder. A scratch as though made by a big angry cat with sharp claws.

Then again—it might only have been a thorn scratch—which is what I choose to believe . . .

ABOUT THE COVER: The ship, a three man atmosphere and surface-to-orbit craft, is being used in the search for rare minerals in the asteroid belt. The rock texture in the painting was achieved by spraying color on to crumpled paper, then flattening the paper and pasting it to the already painted background.

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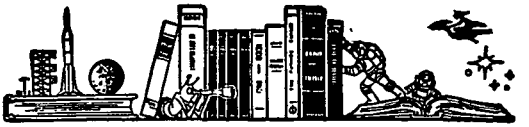
BOOKS



The purpose of this volume has been to display both by word and example what the editor means when he uses the term 'sense of wonder' in relationship to science fiction. In the process, three truly marvelous short novels have been rescued from pulp oblivion. . . . Beyond the considerable entertainment quotient of these stories, it is hoped that their examples may make a significant enough impression so as to bring about not a substitution of this type of story for what is being written today, but an incorporation of the elements they contain into the mainstream body of modern science fiction.

The volume in question is THREE STORIES, (by Leinster, Williamson and Wyndham in his John Beynon Harris incarnation, Doubleday, $3.95). The editor, and author of the didactic seventeen-page introduction, is of course Sam Moskowitz (known through science fiction fandom as just SaM).

I have read SaM's commentary, though I confess to skipping his synopses of *Gulliver, The Odyssey,* and *The Time Machine,* and just skimming some pages of history of "The Golden Age of the Scientific Romance" (as represented primarily in *Argosy* and *All-Story Weekly,* 1906-1919), and I am not much clearer about what he means when he says *Sense of Wonder;* but I have pretty well decided that my own problem is not so much atrophied SoW as undeveloped SoN.

N is for Nostalgia, and on this SaM is an expert, even by the standards of Pop Culture. I don't know if it came out of a surfeit of newness and change, or perversely just that nothing *really new* has happened lately. (I mean, it's *ten years* now since the last Real Breakthru—and no men on the moon yet, no cancer cure, no global war, time travel, anti-gravity, immortality pill.) Whatever the reason, the big N is *in,* and anything from Aubrey Beardsley through left-wing Americana of the thirties will put you with it.

And of course, science fiction is ahead of the field; the program Inside S-f has been underway for years. We have ERB cults and Conan clubs and EESmith concordances, but most of all, we have SaM.

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From the horse's mouth:

We see on every side nostalgia *becoming the secret ingredient that today moves the more mature adults to experience again some of the exhilaration associated with their youth.* [Using dime-novel collectors as an example, SaM explains that rereading an old book] *became a trigger for nostalgic remembrance, in detail, of the innocence and bittersweet of their youth. It was a literary windshield wiper which cleared the mist from memory, enabling the mature mind to view with understanding the wonder of a youthful day forever past. . . .*

The child or teenager who originally read the dime-novel truly had that sense of wonder within himself. *The child grown old restored the* memory *of those feelings.*

It is legitimate to ask, can the author induce a sense of wonder in the reader without the existence of a special mental receptivity and appropriate subjective conditions of age and timing?

Before I give you his answer, I must pause to assure anyone unfamiliar with SaM's work that he is in deadly earnest: SaM is perhaps the only American writing critical copy today who has less understanding of camp than Susan Sontag. And he makes that clear:

The sad part about the revival of "comic" hero characters is that they are making their way with the adults as satirization *of themselves.*

Two Broadway musicals supplied SaM with the answer to his troubling question: *Superman* and *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes.* He says:

It never was the intent of the creators of Superman to convince anyone above the age of twelve of the reality of their character. No adult could hope to retain an interest in so far-fetched a character except *as a satire.* [But] *A Sherlock Holmes story, read for the first time, holds the same sway over the imagination of an adult as it does for a child.*

And so:

The answer is in the positive if he [the author] *combines sincerity with his relation and creates a* mood *that will engage the emotion as well as the intellect of his reader.*

How does all this apply to science fiction? It seems there was a survey in the *Science Fiction Yearbook* for 1957 which showed that only 12½% of the readers of s-f were over 40. Allowing for the probability that what this actually means is that 12½% of science-fiction fan club and convention members ten years ago were over 40, it is as recent as most census figures, and as representative as most polls: at least 1% and possibly 2% of the total readership.

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In any case, SaM wants to know why more of his (and my) generation are not interested in his (and my) favorite reading matter. Is science fiction "less necessary" as one grows older?

. . . *Has a man or woman after forty either relaxed in the attainment of an acceptable degree of creature comforts and economic security, or resigned him- or herself to distinct limitations and, in either case, found that science fiction is no longer a bright roadmap of the future and that it offers no escape from the reality of their situations?*

This should be true only if the sense of wonder is generated only in the individual with the content of science fiction merely a source of ignition. However, if a sense of wonder can be made an ingredient of the story . . . it should be possible to revive the feeling, no matter what the age of the individual.

I have quoted all this because after reading it myself I am not honestly sure whether I am arguing with SaM or agreeing with him, when I say: although I will be 45 on my next birthday, and that birthday is not very far away, I guess I am one of the *less* mature adults, because I haven't yet started getting my biggest charges out of *remembering* my biggest charges. Nostalgia, for me, is a sleepy sort of thing—maybe maudlin at a beery 3 a.m.—perhaps more sentimental in a lingering summer twilight—but either way associated with a low pulse-rate. It certainly is not what makes me read science fiction.

It all makes me wonder if maybe my SoW hasn't been operating all this time after all? I've been sitting around with the rest of the gang all these years while SaM gave us hell for losing our SoW's, and I kept thinking I had no business arguing back, because I have this sort of guilty thing, see? about being the only one in my age bracket (apparently) who didn't start reading the stuff when *Air Wonder* began. (I mean, I was three in 1926, and perfectly able to read—well, all right, not *perfectly*—and I sat around spelling out Kipling and Carroll and Milne when everyone else was already digging those truly marvelous stories. I could plead financial incapacity; I didn't have my own allowance yet. But when I did get it, I blew it on stuff like Keats and Housman and Whitman. Anyhow—) I didn't actually come to s-f till the ripe age of 18: the 1938-42 magazines. (Ragged starting dates due to financial problems again—no more allowance; I started in the 2nd hand magazine stores.)

I have gone back since then, and read some earlier work. And at least one thing SaM said, I know I do agree with—his comment on Sherlock Homes. Be-

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lieve it or not, I never read a Holmes story until 1949, and then I read every one I could get my hands on. The same thing was true for some science fiction (I'll get down to some specifics later): but one thing I know I don't agree with SaM about, is his choice of examples to demonstrate *whatever* he was saying.

I gave all three of these "truly wonderful" stories an honest try, and I even got all the way through one of them.

Leinster's (1934) "Mole Pirates" I *almost* managed to finish. After the first third, I skimmed my way through to the end, because no matter how absurd his story, Leinster has the basic storytelling gift. I had to know how it came out—but I didn't really care *why*, and it was too tedious following the twists and turns on the way. The story is about this Desperate Scientist Criminal who steals Jack Armstrong's—I'm sorry, Jack Hill's—Wonderful Invention, a machine that can travel through solid matter, and uses it to satisfy his psychotic need to Rob, Rape, Loot, Steal, Despoil, and Slaughter. It is full of stuff like this:

He flung a switch and vacuum tubes glowed. A curious, ghostly light appeared above the white-painted sheet of metal on the table. . . . "I am going to coordinate all the atom poles in this piece of brass," he observed. "Around the shop, here, the men say that a thing treated in this way is dematerialized. Watch!" [The block is exposed to 'the field', and—] *Instead of a solid cube of polished brass, there was the tenuous, misty outline of a cube. . . . He swept his hand through the misty block. . . . A skeptical silence hung among the reporters. . . .*

"If that brass was still there, an' it would pass through anything else, it'd slide right through the sheet metal an' drop through the floor!"

"Radio-activity," said Jack. "The only exception. When coordinated matter is bombarded by radio-active particles, some of the atoms are knocked halfway back to normal. This paint has thorium oxide in it. . . ."

This must have been exciting speculation in 1934. For that matter, the basic idea remains speculatively interesting: people are still writing science fiction about aligning atoms to make matter interpenetrative. But the newer stories are easier to read (even when they are no better or more enduring than this one) just because they are in the idiom and use the storytelling conventions of the sixties. (Leinster's story starts out vaguely *wrong* for today's reader, because an invention of this sort is being developed privately and displayed to the press with no security protection. Perhaps the editors were wise to maintain the period-piece effect by keeping the original spell-

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ings of words like coordinate and radio-active. It helps hype up the necessary SoN.)

As for the Williamson, I cannot tell you of my own knowledge what it is about, except that an anti-gravity machine turns out to be a time machine instead, and (according to SaM's careful introductory description) the plot derives from S. Fowler Wright's THE WORLD BELOW, in which a man *disembarking from his time machine, saves a female-like creature from death . . . At times when his energies are depleted, she is able to impart to him, with a touch, some of her own, to enable him to carry forth an urgent venture. Though there can never be anything physical between them, a strong emotional tie does develop.*

This identical situation is taken by Williamson and in 'The Moon Era' developed into a relationship between alien and human in mutual peril of such delicacy and feeling that the story becomes a complete success in the tradition of A. Merritt, conveying the elements of constantly new wonder and mystery . . .

Here is how it is conveyed by Williamson:

He rose, agilely enough for one of his seventy years, and led the way from the long room. Through several magnificent rooms of the big house. Out into the wide, landscaped grounds, beautiful and still in the moonlight.

I followed silently. My brain was confusion. A whirl of mad thought. All this wealth whose evidence surrounded me might be my own! I cared nothing for luxury, for money itself. But the fortune would mean freedom from the thankless toil of pedagogy. Books. Travel. Why I could see with my own eyes the scenes of history's dramatic moments! . . .

I have enjoyed Jack Williamson's later work too much, and I have too much respect for the ability he has since developed, to be willing to go on reading that—particularly after learning from SaM that the story itself is directly derivative from Merritt and Wright, two writers I did *not* find still-viable when I went back to try them out.

The one I did get all the way through was the Harris/Wyndham: it is even possible that I might have read this story on my own if I'd come across it on the sort of idle day I used to have when there was nothing I *had* to read. It is written in English, with no offensive stylistic mannerisms; it has a solid hook at the beginning; the viewpoint character is tolerably convincing (and must have been overwhelmingly so in 1933). Even the bat-like aliens living in caves on an asteroid, enslaving captive humans, provide a couple of scenes the first time they appeared that will stick with me. I can see why

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this one would have stuck in SaM's memory; on two counts at least (besides the literary quality) it would have been an extraordinary story in the thirties. The aliens are neither gods nor devils, but simply castaways, surviving the only way they can. (They even let the surplus, non-useful human leave peaceably.) But what must have provided the greatest impact—in 1933—was the use of the dramatic new brainwashing discoveries of the Behaviorists. The aliens use infant conditioning techniques to accomplish the enslavement of their victims to the total satisfaction of the slaves themselves.

Which brings us to the core of the matter. Harris (Wyndham) wrote his story at just about the same time that another British writer, Aldous Huxley, wrote a book with the same gimmick—probably inspired by the same recent work in psychology—but where "Exiles of Asperus" can still claim to be readable, *Brave New World* is a major contemporary novel, as vital today as when it was published.

It is too easy to say: Huxley was a better writer. I am not at all sure he was that much better, or that (beyond a certain level which Wyndham automatically attains) prose and rhetoric are that important in the durability of a novel. The essential difference, I believe, is that "Exiles" is, like the other two stories in the Moskowitz collection, nothing more than a plot wrapped around a gimmick; *Brave New World* used the gimmick to construct a statement of significance about the world we live in.

I have never heard a word from SaM about the Sense of Wonder in *Brave New World*. Perhaps if I ever do find out what he does mean when he says it, I'll decide that—by his standards—I have gone and lost mine after all?

As I said, nostalgia is trendy, and the trend is not *all* bad; along with *art nouveau* and Victorian bead curtains, we are getting some first-rate reprints. One of these I had the opportunity to test for SoW-versus-SoN: Dover has just brought out a handsome large-size paperback of John Taine's SEEDS OF LIFE, a novel I read breathlessly 25 years ago in a tattered copy of somebody's 1931 *Amazing Quarterly*. I opened the book with nostalgic delight, turned to the first page, started riffling, and realized that although I remember it still, vividly, the memory will have to suffice. I am—I thought—no longer capable of reading that kind of prose. Wrong again: I turned to WHITE LILY, in the same volume, which I had never read—and within two pages stopped noticing the stiff and stilted language at all. For me there is no pleasure to be had *rereading* a work of such clumsy prose, but what has kept other Taine novels fresh in my

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mind through the years was not the words but the content. If either of these novels is new to you, it's a bargain two-dollars'-worth.

Also from Dover comes a new assortment of H. G. Wells' science fiction (BEST SCIENCE FICTION STORIES OF H. G. WELLS, $2.00), including "The Invisible Man" and a selection of 17 shorter pieces from the early collections (*The Stolen Bacillus, The Plattner Story, Tales of Space and Time,* and *Twelve Stories and a Dream* —oddly, nothing from *The Time Machine* . . .) Berkley has also done a new edition of THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON, for 50¢—although they have put their reissue of Capek's WAR WITH THE NEWTS up to 75¢. (My 1955 Bantam edition is still in good condition; it was 35¢. Can costs really have gone up enough to warrant the difference?)

Probably the best buy of the new crop of classy-classic reprints is E. R. Eddison's long-unavailable WORM OUROBOROS, from Ballantine, at 95¢ for a fat 520-page volume with an introduction by Orville Prescott and six excellent illustrations by Keith Henderson. (But Ballantine's latest issue of Ray Bradbury's FAHRENHEIT 451 is less generous: in 1953, the book contained two other stories, "The Playground" and "And the Rock Cried Out," all for 35¢; "Fahrenheit #451" alone is now 60¢.)

Back to nostalgia, pure and pleasant: the ERB people.

I mentioned earlier my delighted late discovery of Sherlock Holmes. While not sharing their degree of enthusiasm, I can easily understand why the Baker Street Irregulars construct their elaborate games around the mythical body of Holmes. With only a little less empathy, I can accept the buffishness of the ERB fans.

Burroughs' science fantasy did not hit me when I was a kid, but Tarzan *walloped* me. I tried rereading one a few years ago, and will never do it again, but I don't *need* to, after all. I still have a fat bag full of Tarzan memories from way back, and as I said, my own kind of nostalgia is passive: I don't want to see the words again, because their banality will only spoil the magic for me.

I found, however, that photographs of the long line of movie Tarzans spoiled nothing, and delighted me: as did much of the scatter of information and reminiscence in Robert Fenton's THE BIG SWINGERS (Prentice-Hall, $6.95), which is a sort of double-image biography of Burroughs-and-Tarzan. It is a ridiculous book: I can hardly say whether the physical appearance of it or the writing is less attractive; but it is crammed with tidbits—the membership card of the first "Tarzan Tribe" club, Burroughs' ardent appeal to the US Government in

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1917 to set up a national reserve army, a news account of ERB's 99-day cross-country trip (1916) with rigged-out-truck-and-trailer serving as an early version of today's camper-trailer, Burroughs' statement on the Scopes Trial, or the photographs of the movie Tarzans already mentioned—so *full* of tidbits about two essentially fascinating characters (or rather, author-and-character) that it does not need a specialized fan interest to enjoy it.

I don't mean I'd have gone out and *bought* the book: I do mean I'm glad I have it.

Tarzan, like Sherlock Holmes, has a viability beyond the fame or literary capacities of his author; both figures have, in half a century, worked their way into the pantheon of contemporary mythology. Not so the Gray Lensman. THE UNIVERSES OF E. E. SMITH (Ron Ellik and Bill Evans, Advent, $6.00) is an enthusiastically introduced, handsomely produced, painstakingly prefaced, indexed, appendixed, and bibliographed volume which, after all, contains nothing *but* introductions, prefaces, indexes, appendices, bibliographies, and 225 pages of *concordances* (sic) relating to a series of stories of very specifically limited fan interest. One can only say, a bit weakly, that it is certainly the handsomest, and probably the most expensive fan publication going.

Also from Advent (at the same price!) is the long-awaited second edition of Damon Knight's collection of reviews and critical writings, IN SEARCH OF WONDER—almost twice as long as the 1956 edition, and fascinating, if frequently infuriating, reading. I cannot comment at any length on this book, because I find myself (except on the topic of my own work) almost as much in agreement with Knight's views as I am in disagreement with his (often unnecessarily) vitriolic manner of presenting them. This is an intelligent, literate, knowledgeable, instructive book; if it is also highly opinionated, often arrogant, and sometimes vicious—why, better Knight's vinegar than SaM's treacle.

A vital addition to any reference shelf.

—JUDITH MERRIL

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Opponents of gun control legislation point out that guns don't kill people; that people kill people. Although we've never been one to point our finger at guns, the things just don't seem to be in the same class as other potential instruments of death: nylon stockings, frozen legs of lamb, falling safes. But probably the most suspicious instrument of all is the one which most closely resembles man—for instance, the robot . . .

THE SAW AND THE CARPENTER

by J. T. McIntosh

I WAS ROUSED IN THE MIDDLE OF the night by four hard, silent men, and I was scared. All they would tell me was that they were taking me to "the department" right away. Literally the only additional scrap of information I was able to extract was that I had no choice in the matter, which was obvious anyway.

They took me downtown in a big black car. Obviously they were security men. I never seriously considered the possibility that they were either crooks or ordinary cops. This reassured me not at all.

Having a clear conscience didn't really help. A scientist working on top-secret projects like robotics (anyway, my branch of robotics was top-secret) can never be quite sure he's officially clean. Maybe in the old days, the early days of government-research security, this was possible: you didn't get into the club then unless you had a record of non-deviation going back at least nine months before birth. But all that was changed now, and rightly—nobody who hadn't had a few radical thoughts at the age of fourteen could possibly be capable of original, daring thoughts at the age of thirty, forty or fifty. Sensible though this was, certain things in eminent researchers' pasts were still considered dangerous, when they emerged, and now they often emerged after you were in the club instead of stopping you from getting into it in the first place.

For instance: had some high-

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level moron drawn the wrong conclusions from that bit of international pole-vaulting five years back, when Dr. Yo San Lin and I, having discovered we were duplicating effort, met in Switzerland and saved each other about seven years each? It was a straight deal. Yo could undoubtedly do the work I had already done, and I could undoubtedly do his if I had to. The other side saved about seven years of Yo's time, and my side saved about seven years of mine. Politically the transaction was neutral—the allegiance of neither of us was affected. But security might not see the incident the same way.

When we arrived, I was taken to a small office and left alone (a good sign?) with a man I recognized as General Deacon.

General Deacon was one of the faceless ones, in two senses. The blank face I saw didn't pretend to be his real face; it was a comfortable yet easily identifiable mask, subtle because although the change made was enough to make close colleagues pass the general in his *alter ego* in the street, enough was seen to make the mask useless for anyone else.

In the other sense, General Deacon, mask and all, was supposed to be something in the department which he so obviously was not that it's not worth mentioning. Stenographers, clerks and other minor human impediments of bureaucracy, even security bureaucracy, believed he was what he was supposed to be, but the rest of us knew perfectly well he was something else.

I knew of him rather than knew him, and, I should have thought, *vice versa*.

Anyway, he wasted no time. "Dr. Spring," he said, "you're going to Station X, location and purpose not to be revealed to you . . . but somewhere in the Solar System. There you will investigate a murder."

A vast relief descended on me. When security became halfway sensible, it stopped being pointlessly devious. This wasn't a trick. I really was to investigate a murder, on some space station or other which really was in the Solar System.

Relieved on that point, I was instantly astonished. "A murder? Me?"

"You've been selected. Obviously, the core of the matter is robotics. This is murder by robot."

I opened my mouth quickly, and closed it slowly. It was no use saying robots didn't murder human beings. In the ordinary way they didn't, but somehow that had been taken care of. In fact, it would be quite easy.

"Why a robotics expert?" I said. "One human being has killed another human being. The robot is merely the instrument. If a man's head was cut off with a saw, would

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you call in a carpenter to solve the mystery?"

The general nodded. "That's why," he said obliquely.

It wasn't difficult to work out what he meant. He didn't mean that if a man was murdered with a saw, he'd call in a carpenter. "That's why" meant I was chosen because I was able to see at once, with no details, that murder-by-robot was by no means necessarily a job for a robotics expert.

General Deacon got up. (Already?) "You leave on a naval scout. In ten minutes, from a secret launching pad in this building. You will be transferred to a cruiser, but the details of your trip need not concern you. No one will tell you where you're going, and it's superfluous to point out that the time of the journey may be modified to give you the impression you've traveled farther than or not as far as you think."

"No briefing?" I said.

"None. You'll get details on your arrival. I'll tell you just this—the murder has to be solved. You're not supposed to be a policeman. Find the killer, satisfy the commander of the space station that you're right, and that's all that concerns you. You may never hear the end of the story. But the whole conception of staffing of space stations may have to be altered as a result of what has happened, and your ultimate report."

He hesitated, and then, coming from behind the desk and shaking my hand, said: "All you have to do is be right. If you fail, say so, and someone else will take over. We'll isolate the space station concerned, if necessary, until the entire personnel die of old age. We don't have to prove anything in a court of law, so you don't have to be the Great Detective proving every little point to the hilt and then arranging a confession to make sure. Just satisfy the commander, that's all."

I had to say it: "Suppose the commander is the killer?"

The mask tried to smile. "It's possible. If that's your conclusion, you'll be able to arrange with the navy to have yourself taken off, with the station still isolated. Then we'll get to work, and your job will still be over. But the particular solution you've mentioned seems unlikely . . . the murdered man was the commander's only son."

Deacon had been speaking the truth when he said that details of the trip needn't concern me. I might have been a package marked "not needed en route" and locked in a lightless hold. I couldn't even be sure the trip took four days, as I thought, because I was reclad in black overalls after being stripped of everything I had with me, including my watch, and the time on the two ships, the scout and the cruiser, might have been one big fix as far as I was concerned. I

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could have been drugged two or three times and shaved each time about eight hours before the drug wore off.

After x days I was inserted into a space station which I was not allowed to see. Two reasons why I wasn't allowed even a glimpse were, I guessed: (1)I might know exactly where I was by a glance around the dark sky (quite wrong), and (2) the shape and size of the station might be highly significant to me (wrong again).

None of the navy men landed with me. They handed me over, had a delivery note signed, and departed.

Then, between two white-overalled technicians who were as silent, though not quite as unsmiling, as the four security men who had taken me to General Deacon, I marched through miles of corridors . . .

Space stations, I saw, were not as coldly functional as the building might have suggested. This one was warm, breathing, living—despite the fact that there had been a murder here. Although no doubt there had been a directive that there were to be no incidents or demonstrations when Dr. Spring arrived, and in spite of my guards, I walked through a fairly normal human community, and the signs refused to be repressed.

People emerged from doors and cross-passages, saw us, and depending on their knowledge of the situation and temperament, retreated hastily or stood watching us frankly or flashed welcoming smiles at me or frowned grimly or looked scared or cast astonished glances at my two guards (who went red) or whispered to others behind them or did any of the other things that small-town people do when a (temporarily) Very Important Person arrives on an official visit.

Small town. That was the key. A space station this size was a small town. For all I'd been told, it could have been any kind of station—a four-man mail depot, for instance. From what I could now see for myself, the population was anything between five hundred and five thousand men, women and children. I didn't see any kids under fourteen or fifteen, but that figured—they'd be in school or nursery.

Whatever the purpose of this station, then, it was organized on the lines of a permanent community rather than a lighthouse. The duty rotation was not, say, three months on and two months off, but more or less permanent with frequent breaks from duty and less frequent vacations away from the station. Many things followed from this, and I started to grapple with them.

I also saw what there was to be seen . . . A warm, well-aired, normal-pressure environment with about a quarter Terran gravity. Lean, alert people (gluttony and

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lack of exercise must be proscribed) dressed like inhabitants of a small town rather than technicians—no uniform was in evidence, and only my guards and a few mechanics or lab workers wore overalls, apart from me. Keen interest in me and a universal awareness why I was there. There was awe, too, which among these obviously intelligent people I took not to be awe of me, but that an outsider should have to be called in to investigate, in their little world, a *homicide.*

Then came a meeting which could have been as accidental as all the rest, or contrived . . .

A young, slightly chubby but obviously athletic man walking ahead of us heard us overtaking him, turned and gaped. He stopped. The guards, uneasily, stopped too.

"Dr. Spring?" he said.

"Yes, Mr. Stanley," I said.

"Huh? Oh . . . sorry. Look . . . I'm Bob Wilde. You'll be hearing about me in a minute. I don't want to say anything, not *anything,* except—you're a research man, aren't you? You don't jump to conclusions?"

"I reach them," I said. "I sincerely hope I don't jump."

He sighed in relief. "Good," he said, and without another word or look turned into a side passage.

The guards said nothing. I thought of asking them who Bob Wilde was (they clearly knew him) but refrained. And we marched on.

Without warning the guards turned and threw open, without knocking, a door exactly like hundreds we had passed. One of them said awkwardly: "Dr. Spring . . . Commander Hogg," and that was that. The door closed and I was alone with the comander.

"Sorry about that, Dr. Spring," said the commander pleasantly. "Let's correct your preliminary impressions first of all."

"Are they necessarily wrong?" I asked mildly.

The room was not an office, nor a study, nor a lounge. It was a control room of some kind, with banks of screens but no visible equipment and few switches. There were no chairs at all, no tables, no couches. We had to stand.

The commander was a lean, smiling man who might have been thirty-five but could be ten years older (it was his son's murder I was to investigate, and surely all this did not concern the death of a boy of fifteen?). He had black hair without a trace of gray.

Oddly enough, I scarcely listened to his preamble, beyond picking up the sense. He was earnestly trying to convince me that his space station was a good station, that the work was not slack, that the casual way the frigs went about it was misleading, that the fact that one among so many was a cold, calculating killer scarcely affected the general picture. . . .

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Ye gods, I thought: the man's son is killed and he starts off by defending his station against the Big Expert sent to find the killer.

All I said was: "Frigs?"

He was stopped dead in his tracks. I shouldn't have done that —I should have let him go on, and found out about frigs later.

"Just a word for . . . us," he said. "All the people in this station."

"Men, women and children?"

"Yes."

I waited for him to resume, but he didn't resume. Having said only five words, I decided not to talk so much from now on. All the same, I had to start him off again.

I said: "Commander, you're wrong—so wrong. I thought, on my way here, that I'd never seen, never felt such an atmosphere of belonging, togetherness, mutual trust, at this moment mutual shock . . ."

The line was perfect. Only the very last word might have been a mistake, but it turned out it wasn't.

"That's it," he said eagerly. "We don't understand this. We asked for help—I asked for help—because none of us can begin to understand what's happened, and why. Oh, it's not the mere fact of killing. Couple of months ago one of our best men killed his wife. He's in Milan now, in a home, poor devil. Sure, he should have tried to resolve an impossible situation some other way, and so he did, but it didn't work. No way would work. Killing the bitch he loved—and we only had her here in the first place because of him—solved nothing either, of course, but . . ."

He stopped again, and I knew that was all I was going to hear about the poor devil in a Milan nursing home.

"John," said the commander, changing tracks, "was prickly. I've tried to work that out. He was twenty-three—not a kid any more. There was no trouble about his work. I'm sorry, I can't tell you about that. I've had instructions. You'll have to take my word on this point; his work had nothing to do with what happened. Either through its effect on him or the effect on anyone else—"

I had decided to listen as long as there was anything to listen to, but this got me. It also, instantly, showed itself as a way out of a job I was not wildly enthusiastic about and didn't see myself particularly suited for. A robotics expert had been called in, for Pete's sake, because a robot had killed a man . . .

So I said: "If I have to take people's word for what I am and am not to look into, I've wasted my time making the journey from Earth. Goodby, commander. I've no idea whom they'll send to take over from me."

I turned to the door.

If there hadn't been an inter-

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ruption, what would have happened then is anybody's guess. Later, when I knew the commander better, I had the idea that he'd probably have let me go, taking the line that if I gave up so easily it was unlikely I'd be able to accomplish anything anyay.

But as I turned to the door, a pretty blonde in a green dress came in. "Oh, you must be Dr. Spring," she said. After that she ignored me. Looking past me, she said: "Sorry to interrupt, commander. But at the school we have to know what line to take about . . . about John's death. The kids keep asking questions, naturally."

"What kind of questions, Miss Robertson?" Hogg asked.

"All kinds—you know kids. We've told them he's dead. Is there to be a version for children—he died in an accident? Or do we say a robot went wrong and ran over him? Or what?"

The commander sighed. "You can't make them terrified of robots. There are so many around. And the Mother Robot . . ." He stopped.

"So?"

"Say the robot made a mistake. Or was given wrong instructions, or something like that."

The blonde was not only shapely, she was stubborn. "No, commander, that won't do. If we tell a lie or only part of the truth, it'll have to be exactly the same lie or the same part of the truth. That's why I came for a ruling. If a dozen teachers tell the children vague, slightly different stories, even their parents, who know more of the truth, will start to believe bits of the different versions, and there will be as many rumors flying about as there are frigs—"

"Say," I interrupted, "that I'm a robotics man. They'll be able to check that somewhere. Say I'm out to check a particular model, all units of which will be withdrawn until I clear them. All other models are as safe as ever."

She recognized my existence and made up her mind. "Right," she said. "That's it, then." And she went out. She had not even glanced at the commander for confirmation.

"So you're still on the job?" said the commander drily.

"Okay," said John Hogg angrily. "Let's go there right now."

"You're not serious?" said Bob Wilde.

"You know perfectly well he's serious, Bob," said Lucy Robertson coolly. "He's never anything else."

"What, the two of us, supposed to be scientists, settling an argument with fists?"

"Put up or shut up," said John savagely.

"Okay," said Bob wearily. "I'll shut up."

"Suppose I hit you here in the corridor?"

"Then I'd probably hit you back."

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"Right, then. The gym. Now."

Bob looked at Lucy. "*You* say something, do something."

"No. Of course this is silly, but it may be necessary. I like you, Bob, but I may marry John. I don't know. I won't marry him the way he is—who would? He wants to fight you. Maybe in his obscure way he wants you to thrash him to prove to himself that he's wrong. Maybe that's even scientific. Then he can start to be right."

John swung on her. "What am I, It? Are you talking to him or to me?"

"To Bob. It isn't pleasant for him. He'll have to beat you up far more than he wants to, because you're stubborn and won't give in."

"It's not worth considering the possibility that I may beat him up?"

"No," she said simply.

John marched off, barking "Coming?" over his shoulder.

They found a small, empty gymnasium and locked the door. The two young men stripped to shorts and sneakers. Lucy, who was unusually elegant in a dance frock (she was always neat but seldom provocative), took a bell from a cupboard, leaned against the wall bars, and said: "You'll do this in three-minute rounds, or not at all. Number of rounds unlimited. I won't interfere whatever you do—kill each other if you like—but when I hit this bell you'll stop, or I'll get the peace officers and have you both locked up. Understood?"

Bob made one last try. "John, you're not a bad guy, except when you stampede. You're good at your job, though not as good as you think you are—"

"Who could be?" Lucy sighed.

"But this is a matter of opinion. If you think anything's going to be solved by you and me battering each other, you're crazy."

"Fine, I'm crazy. Hit that bell, Lucy."

She did.

After the first thirty seconds Lucy, whose toughness and determination were real enough, without really affecting her essential femininity, didn't want to watch any more. It was every bit as bad as she expected. John, who was slightly heavier, taller and had the longer reach, and something of an athlete as well, simply didn't stand a chance against a man who knew how to fight and refused to get rattled. Why, she wondered, didn't she have the sense to love a man like Bob instead of John?

And at once she told herself: (1) She didn't love John, (2) Shirley would have something to say about contenders for Bob's affection, (3) Bob, for all his apparent stability, was probably making as bad a job of choosing as she was.

The fight was not worth attention in detail. John rushed madly. Every punch was meant to finish the fight. Bob blocked steadily, re-

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treated steadily, scored steadily.

Lucy struck the bell and the two men stepped apart.

Perhaps, she thought, her theory was right: John, an obvious loser, looked happier in himself. Perhaps, as she hoped, John at twenty-three was one of those late emotional developers, on the point of bursting his shell at last and becoming at long last a complete human being. Perhaps this, unlike so many other things she had tried in the last four months, was going to produce positive results.

Half-way through the breather, someone banged on the locked door. All three looked at it. In such a station, there were umpteen places for physical recreation; perhaps twenty percent of the total space was given up to this in one form or another.

The quarrel had flared at a dance. It was late at night, artificial night maybe, but none the less night. All the young children were asleep, nearly all the older children, and many of the adults. Any man who wanted to lambast a punchbag, any woman who wanted to pedal off a few ounces, had a choice of about twenty places to do so. Who so furiously, angrily, wanted this particular gym? Shirley? How could Shirley know Bob was in here?

The knocking stopped. Belatedly, Lucy touched the bell.

It got no better. John wasn't in it. He kept rushing wildly, going down, jumping up, taking a beating. His face was puffy and marked, and Bob showed no sign of damage.

Then the fight ended abruptly.

John went down heavily and fell against the wall bars. His left hand, flung out, slipped between the bars, and he crashed awkwardly on his left arm. There was a sharp crack. He got up slowly, holding his left hand in his right.

"Broken wrist," said Lucy, after a quick inspection. "Clean fracture. Bob, call first-aid."

"No," said John. He was pale, but quite calm. "This was a private matter. It's going to stay private."

"It was an accident," Bob said. "Obviously it was an accident—"

"Does my face looked as if it happened when I was doing handsprings?" said John, half smiling.

"Got it," said Lucy. "The Young Docs. They'll fix you up."

"Sure," said Bob, with relief. John, though not as immediately enthusiastic, shrugged and nodded.

The commander turned from the screens on which he had been showing me pictures of John and Bob and Lucy Robertson, two of whom I knew already, as he told the story.

"You're getting it almost as if you were there," he said. "Both Lucy and Bob, after it happened, volunteered to go under drug treatment so that every last detail of what happened that night could go

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on the record. You'll get a copy—complete except for three sentences of purely technical reference. You can read the rest for yourself if you like."

"You're doing all right," I said. "Take it on from there."

The Young Docs were all in bed, their own beds, and there was no one with them. Jack Lodge whooped with joy when he saw John's battered face and said: "Well, boy, even you can't say you didn't have it coming." Stew Jones barely opened red eyes; he was sleeping off a bender and hadn't even reached hangover stage yet. Dod Stirling was quiet, sympathetic and efficient. He was one of the few men on the station who had never had a row with John.

"We need a nurse," said Jack, becoming halfway professional, "and it just so happens—"

"The fewer who know about this the better," said John shortly. "That's why I came to you."

"Oh, but this girl's okay, and she's practically on the premises. Would have been on the premises in fact, only . . . well, never mind."

He was on his way out as he spoke. Nobody had ever been able to handle Jack Lodge. If he wanted to do a thing, he did it, and for some reason he wanted this girl brought in.

He was back with her in a matter of seconds. She was a lean, strong brunette in a short belted wrap and mules. "This is Jinny," he said. "Now let's get to work."

The Young Docs were three medicos who had not changed since their days of being wild medical students. They drank, they wenched, they swore, they fought, they were always thinking up stunts and putting them into effect. They were inseparable. They had a bedroom each only for convenience. It was rumored that they shared their women as casually as they borrowed each other's shavers.

They were, of course, good doctors and a good team, or they'd never have gotten away with their off-duty activities.

Dod and the girl tended John's wrist while Jack tried to pump Bob and Lucy. Stew had gone back to sleep, in the room they were in, which doubled as lounge and bedroom.

"I can give you an injection," Dod said, "which will fix the shock and make you feel fine, but it'll keep you awake. Or I can—"

"Do that," said John. "I think I'll do some work."

"Huh? With a broken wrist, in the middle of the night?"

"I'll do some work," said John obstinately.

They all knew him, except Jinny, so only she was going to argue. But Dod closed one eye at her.

There was pounding on the door. It was so like the pounding on the gym door that Lucy and

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Bob assumed at once the same person was responsible.

Jack let Shirley in. "Well, fine," he said, looking her up and down, and then looking back at the long laces which kept what there was of her dress from falling to the floor. "Let's have a party. Never mind John; he was just going. And Stew isn't with us. That leaves three of each kind, a splendid arrangement."

Shirley, who was furious, ignored him. She ignored everyone but Bob. "What kind of a fool do you think I felt?" she demanded. "Everybody knew you'd run out on me."

Six people talked at once. John, whose wrist was fixed, who had had his injection, turned to the door. "I'm going to work," he said shortly.

Lucy went after him. She didn't speak; she was merely watching to make sure he was all right. Bob, with Shirley, trailed behind them. Jack shrugged and shut the door, turning to Jinny.

They hadn't far to go. It was a strange procession—a grim-faced man with a broken wrist, a girl following about ten yards behind, a couple whispering and arguing but still trailing along, partly because Bob had never apologized or sympathized and felt he ought to say something to John, or maybe to Lucy.

They reached the door in Section C where two guards stood.

"Anybody in?" John demanded.

"No, Mr. Hogg," said one of the guards.

"Well, I'm going in."

They looked at each other, at his bandaged wrist, at the two girls and the man dressed for a party or a dance. They didn't argue. They let John through.

"Two hours later," said the commander, "a Class M robot crawled along the station hull in space and drilled three holes in the outer lab where John was working. There are all sorts of safeguards, but somehow they were all bypassed. I have to tell you this much: John's lab is against the hull for a purpose, and the hull there is thin for a purpose. He lost his air, couldn't do anything in time, and . . . died."

"And the robot?"

"Crawled back the way it came, and by the time it re-entered the service airlock, peace officers were waiting for it. They removed its program card. There was an immediate alarm when the air was lost, naturally, and within seconds the *modus operandi* was obvious. There was a double alarm, as a matter of fact, because the Mother Robot . . ."

He stopped. He hadn't been going to mention the Mother Robot—not, I guessed, because there was any pretense that such a station could get along without a Mother Robot, but because once we started discussing her he was on dangerous

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ground. Obviously she must be in on the security stuff up to her nonexistent metal neck . . .

Without my having to speak, he realized he had to finish what he had started to say. He went on: "The Mother Robot monitors the restricted sections. Not constantly, of course. But she reported the leak and the probable explanation a few seconds before we got the same information from other sources."

"The card?" I said.

"Oh . . . I'll show it on the screen."

A picture appeared on the screen, a blowup of one of the cards used for programming low-grade robots.

I couldn't work it all out without computer aid, but I could see how this plan had worked. The robot was simply instructed to make for a certain point on the station hull by a certain route and drill three holes. The priority index was high enough to make it do as it was told and not high enough to demand special authorization on the card from the Mother Robot or the chief robotics engineer.

The symbols which meant that the necessary calculations had been made and that all required permission had been given appeared to be in order. One symbol which I didn't quite understand was almost certainly a false assurance that Section C had been evacuated.

"Thank you," I said to the commander. "I've got a general view of what happened, and how it happened. But you've more to tell me, haven't you?"

"About what in particular?"

"Why you told me about John, Lucy, Bob, Shirley, Jack, Stew, Dod and Jinny, and about no one else. And what they all did afterwards."

"The killer must have been one of them," said the commander simply.

"Including John?"

"Including John."

"Why?"

"Only those eight knew where John was at the time."

"Plus the guards. And the Mother Robot."

"The guards are out. Being on guard duty, they were automatically monitored. They stayed at their post, they contacted nobody, they saw no robot. It's impossible for them to be involved. Same goes for the Mother Robot. Nobody could possibly have learned from that source that John was in Section C —take my word for it. And she couldn't possibly have been connected in the killing itself unless —and this is possible—*John himself* somehow arranged it."

I nodded. This wasn't difficult to follow. Mother Robots are robot-servicing units and computers in one. They don't go around killing people. In fact, they don't go around at all. And their eyes and

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ears and hands and messengers are Class A and B robots, which they control by radio—not Class Ms, which are programed by cards for routine jobs.

"It was possible for those seven?" I said. I wasn't going to ignore the possibility that this was elaborate suicide, but I didn't think I was going to waste a lot of time on it.

"Yes."

"Tell me. And tell me who you think didn't kill John, and why."

He raised his eyebrows, but didn't comment.

"Well, of course, any one of these eight could have told somebody else where John was, and if that happened anybody in the station could be responsible. But they all swear nobody knew, nobody could have known."

"John himself? Could he have told anybody?"

"Before it all happened, yes. Before the quarrel with Bob he could have told someone he'd be in the Section C outer lab through the night. Afterwards, no. You know he had no opportunity before he went in. After he went in, calls would have to be to the guards, who would have them put through. There were none."

"But he *could* have told somebody. Earlier in the evening, I mean."

"Yes . . . the probability is low. He'd been at a dance. He'd been drinking—not much, but he never drinks and then works late. The overwhelming probability is that his sudden decision to work through the night was an obstinate whim, the way it looked."

"The other seven?" I said.

"Forget the girls."

"Sugar and spice and all things nice?"

"No. You've met Lucy. I won't say anything about her except I hoped she was going to be my daughter-in-law."

"Anyway, she's out because of the drug questioning, huh?"

"No . . . not because of that. Both she and Bob offered to help as witnesses, not suspects. They were questioned about events up to the last time they saw John. Neither gave the examiners permission to go further. In fact they refused."

"So it's possible . . . ?"

"It's possible. But only in that sense. Lucy didn't kill John. Now take Jinny. She's a nurse. She was only brought in accidentally because she happened to be close and Jack Lodge wanted her there. He hoped she'd stay . . . she didn't. So as for alibis, they don't exist. Later, the doctors were in their separate rooms and any one of them could have gone out. Jinny could have gone out. The other three soon split up and went to bed—in time for any one of them to do . . . whatever was done."

I began to wonder what I was doing on this job, for a new rea-

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son. The commander was no fool, and if the death of his son had hit him hard, he was over the immediate effects, and I could see no sign that his judgment was warped. Why couldn't he work this out himself? What was I expected to contribute?

"Jinny," I murmured interrogatively.

"There's no evidence she knew John at all. Apparently she didn't, and nothing has happened to shake that impression."

"Shirley, then?"

"Hard to see why Shirley should want to kill John, but I'm counting her out on a plain fact of temperament. The girl's an exhibitionist."

I'd seen a picture of her in the dress she'd been wearing, the front of which consisted mainly of a V slash and laces across the gap. I nodded.

Hogg went on: "Not just in obvious ways, though if you call on her she'll take a bath or find it necessary to change her clothes. She'll also tell you everything—you'll see what I mean. She turns herself inside out."

"That leaves the four men."

"Yes . . . well, I've answered everything I could up to now, but from now on you'll have to let me out."

"Why the sudden silence?"

"I'm certain one of those four men killed my son. Totally certain. So . . . hadn't you better form your own conclusions?"

I nodded. "But I still want you to tell me one thing. Why is Bob Suspect No. 1?"

He was only slightly surprised. "Somebody's told you something, then. Well, that's not hard to answer. But before I answer, let me say *I* don't rate Bob Suspect No. 1. He's one of the four, sure. That's all."

I nodded again.

"Bob worked with John," said Hogg. "On different parts of the same project—sometimes the same parts. They fought often and bitterly. Bob will get, in fact has got, a considerable step up as a direct consequence of John's death. And Bob is the only member of the group, apart from John himself, who could have worked out this death plan and programed the robot almost without having to think."

"Bob's a robotics expert?"

"He knows robots," said the commander evasively.

"So why, to you, is he only one of four suspects, the other three of which look unlikely even to me?"

"Well, why make such a mess of it, if it was Bob? Does the only knife-thrower in a village murder a man with a thrown knife? Does the only man with a key to a store lock the body in the store, knowing the cops are going to find it? Does a man who has umpteen chances to kill a colleague, week after week, in ways which would most certainly pass for an acci-

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dent, deliberately pick the one time when the killing's obviously murder, by one of a small group of people, and with him as the obvious suspect?"

"You may have a point," I agreed.

I found there were no restrictions on my movements throughout the space station except those that applied generally. I couldn't enter Section C or Section F, and I couldn't go outside in a spacesuit, but neither could anyone else who didn't have special authority.

After a pretty thorough exploration of the space station and some conversation with over a score of people, including the police (called peace officers here, euphemistically) but not including the seven principals, I sat down at an electric typer in the library and wrote (because I like to think on paper):

Conclusion 1: Anyone at all could have programed the Class M robot to kill John Hogg. This could have been done at leisure, at any time, in the knowledge that sooner or later he'd be working alone in that particular lab and that any Class M robot could be triggered as the murder means.

Conclusion based on (a) Ready access to robots, information on programming and programming devices. Any intelligent semi-technical person with a strong enough motive for murder automatically had a strong enough motive for the dull, painstaking work involved. Any idea that murderer must be a robotics expert quite mistaken.

(b) Ready availability of interior plans of space station, and

(c) General knowledge that John Hogg worked in that particular lab. Although Section C is permanently barred to those not engaged in research there, and the nature of that research is classified, even children in school are allowed, even encouraged, to know their space station. All interior (though not exterior) accommodation details are freely obtainable. Thus, people who can't get into Section C and can't find out what goes on there can easily find out dimensions of rooms, etc.

Conclusion 2: Despite this, the murder of John Hogg (or suicide) was set in motion by one of eight people, including himself. Facts on which Commander Hogg based this opinion are easily and overwhelmingly confirmed.

Conclusion based on (a) Completely corroborative evidence of the seven people concerned.

(b) Police investigation ruling out gimmick murder—bugs, locators, etc.

(c) Obvious factor that limitation of information on John Hogg's whereabouts can't help any of the seven involved. If one *did* tell anyone else, in whatever context, there is no reason to deny it and every reason to admit it.

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Conclusion 3 . . .

I deleted this and typed instead:

Plan of action . . .

I deleted that too and wrote no more. There was nothing definite enough to add.

I went to see Lucy Robertson and caught her just as school closed.

I asked: "Why did you kill John Hogg?"

She sniffed. She still wore the green dress. It was neat but almost severely plain. Although a teacher could hardly be expected to dress for school like an actress knowing she was to face a barrage of reporters and cameramen, I got the impression that Lucy's sartorial severity went further than this. I'd seen a picture of her as she'd been on the night of the murder, straight from a dance (the police chief told me these photographs were taken later for background and for the benefit of any outside investigator). Even then she'd been dressed a little more plainly, a little less provocatively, than would be expected of a pretty nineteen-year-old blonde at a dance.

Maybe it was the fact that she sniffed that made me sniff too. Every pretty girl smells of something—perfume, cosmetics, soap, hair lacquer, even deodorant. Lucy smelled of carbolic. Not harsh, hospital carbolic, true, but definitely antiseptic. It wasn't an unpleasant smell, just a very unusual one.

"If that's the best you can do," she said, referring to although not answering my question, "the sooner they send out somebody to replace you the better."

"That's the angle I want to hear about," I said patiently. "John wasn't the most popular man in the station. He made lots of people feel murderous, often. If you'd killed him, why would you have done it?"

"I still can't give you a serious answer. I was considering marrying him—"

"He'd asked you?"

"No, but what's that got to do with it? I guess I would have married him—with my eyes open. We'd have fought, but it's partly true that it takes two to make a quarrel, and I never lose my temper. I know it sounds corny, but I'd have married him sooner or later because he needed me."

I didn't put the question, merely looked it.

"He'd have gotten along better with me than anyone else," she said. "To know all may not quite be to forgive all, but you can come close . . . He was brilliant. He was irritable. And he'd learned that to get things done, *he* had to be obstinate."

"What do you mean, *he* had to be obstinate?"

"Others are smooth. They can guide or persuade. Some have per-

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sonality. They can make people want to please and obey them. Some are strong. People give in to them. John wasn't any of these things. For him, the only way was to decide what was to be done and do it."

"He couldn't work with others?"

"He had to work with others . . . but he wasn't good at it. Others had to go his way. If they didn't instantly agree with him, he worked alone, trying to prove they were wrong and he was right. When he needed help, that was the only way he could get it—demand it, and if he didn't get it, prove that he had to have it."

"His work was on . . ."

Being casual didn't help. She simply looked back at me.

"You know what he worked on?"

"In general, yes."

"Why? You're a teacher. Why did you have to know?"

"A man has to talk about his work. John more than most. The first time he talked too freely, I went to his boss—Hewitson, not the commander. I was told, in the circumstances, to let him leak, but plug the leak. They could trust my discretion more than they could trust John's, they said. They made me promise that if I ever found out John was leaking in any other direction, I'd tell them."

"John wasn't the type," I said, "who might have been expected to be picked for super-secret work."

"No," she admitted readily. "But corners have to be cut, you know. Commander Hogg was here, his wife was here, and he naturally wanted his son to be here too, after training. And John must have had the necessary natural talent. So those in charge took a calculated risk."

Which possibly, I thought, hadn't come off. Maybe it was the decision to let John do secret work in a space station which had led more or less directly to the murder. I remembered something Deacon had said: "The whole conception of staffing of space stations may have to be altered as a result of what has happened, and your ultimate report."

Her casual mention of Hewitson, "John's boss," the station's robotics chief, reminded me I'd have to see him sometime.

But I didn't think it was going to help much.

I knew Horace Hewitson. He not only thought like a machine now—he had always thought like a machine. He had never had strong drink, because, weighing up the pros and cons, he was forced to the conclusion that drinking was ungood; he had never gone with a girl, because, weighing up the . . . well, that was Horace.

He was a brilliant robotics man. But no one, I was certain, would have sent him on such an assignment as I'd been sent.

"Just one thing more, Lucy," I

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said. I saw her eyes flash a little at that; she hadn't given me permission to call her Lucy. "When you and Bob voluntarily gave evidence under drugs, why didn't you go a little further? Why did you agree to be questioned only up to the moment you *left* John? Why didn't you carry on, take the record up to the moment John died and thus establish that you didn't program the robot that killed him?"

She shrugged. "That was at the time . . . before anyone knew very much. We thought then that the last significant moment was the last time we saw John alive."

"And would you be willing, now, to—"

"No," she said firmly.

"Why not?"

"We've had drugs and lie detectors for centuries. Yet it's never been ruled that people have to submit to such examinations—even now, when the results are fully reliable, and when people know they have a right to define the area of questioning and be sure there won't be any tricks. You know as well as I do why not. Admit the principle, and anybody at all could be compelled to condemn himself in the most trifling cases—yes, sir, I did drive at fifty in a forty zone. Crimes have to be proved, that's right. That's the way it should be."

"But you did agree, in fact you volunteered—"

"That was to get on record the most minute, detailed, trustworthy account possible of the last hours of John's life. Going further than that was difficult, as I told Bob at the time. It would have been admitting we were suspected of killing John . . ." She shuddered momentarily. ". . . It would have been a hysterical, desperate protestation of innocence—whoever did it, it wasn't me."

"There are other points of view," I observed.

"Sure. That's mine."

"You said 'as I told Bob.' Does that mean that but for you Bob would have agreed to more exhaustive questioning?"

"I guess so."

"Miss Robertson," I said, "how do you get on with Bob?"

The "Miss Robertson" was deliberate, and I saw it registered. I'd called her Lucy, and she'd reacted, and I was letting her know I'd seen her reaction.

"We're friends," she said. "In case you snoop around, find a cent and think you've found a dollar—he was my lover. My only lover. When I was sixteen, and silly enough to think everybody who hadn't had the Great Experience hadn't begun to live."

"That was silly?"

"Yes. It's love that matters, not sex. All I got was sex. Does that answer your question?"

"It does," I said. "Thank you, Lucy."

Because Bob was clearly impor-

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tant in this affair, I saw his girl friend first.

The commander was so right: when I called on her she was in slacks, reading a magazine, but once I was there she remembered she was going to a movie with Bob, and it became a matter of sudden urgency to doll herself up, more or less in my presence.

It was one of the most revealing acts I'd ever seen in my life, and I'm not talking about the literal aspect of it. There was no reason why she shouldn't have changed in the bedroom, talking through the open doorway if necessary. But though she started out that way, she had to come back for a cigarette, and then a light, and she couldn't manage the simplest, smoothest zips or buttons or hooks or clasps, and I wasn't supposed to look, but when I didn't, she found some way to make me.

Nothing she said was useful. It was all feminine and totally ingenuous, and it reminded me of a remark by a girl of six I once heard when I was visiting her father, a colleague of mine. She and her brother had found the ruins of an old house while out playing, and agreed to keep the secret of this momentous discovery from elder sister. Elder sister came in and they both told her they had a secret, about which she couldn't have cared less, and younger sister blurted out: "It isn't a house."

Shirley was no more capable of concealing a fact than of concealing her navel. It couldn't be an act.

A curious coincidence existed in the essential nature of the two principal girls in the case. They were both pretty, but apart from that they were diametrically opposed.

Lucy was severe, cold on the surface, anti-provocative—but unless I was completely wrong about her, the fires deep in her were so fierce that if she ever let go, she'd be capable of anything.

Shirley played the part of a man-mad siren for all she was worth, but it was all sham. She was trying to convince herself she was a sex goddess. Superficially she had all the equipment, and nothing male spending five minutes in her presence was allowed to have any doubts about it. Yet there were no furnaces in her: only an artificial log-fire effect with cold, leaping flames.

Shirley was out. She might as well not have existed. Indeed, after half an hour with her I wondered, almost seriously, if she did exist at all.

However, there was one important thing I had to find out from her, something which for some reason had not been explained to me. I asked the question.

She giggled. She came close. She practically nuzzled me. "Beginning to get any ideas?" she purred.

I resisted all temptation (which

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I found surprisingly easy) and said simply: "No." Her scent, evidently deliberately aphrodisiac, was choking me.

"Nobody smells like Lucy," said Shirley. "Thank heaven *I* don't . . . When she goes to a dance, she still smells antiseptic, and she realizes it, so she drowns it in the heaviest scent you ever breathed. When I went looking for them, I only had to follow my nose."

I enjoyed the Young Docs rather as you enjoy the terrifying engines of a carousel. I got them together before they embarked on the pleasures of the evening, which were simple: go out, get drunk, raise hell, get a girl.

Apparently all four echelons were equally easy. There was no difficulty about going out. (The station naturally had scores of places of entertainment: cinemas, a theater, music club, variety shows, casino, gymnasiums, poolroom, dance halls, bars with cabaret, even libraries, art galleries and museums for those so inclined.) There was no difficulty about getting drunk. Anyone can get drunk, with no talent, no experience and practically no intelligence. There was no difficulty about raising hell. The trick was to raise hell in such a way that you didn't spend the night in jail and didn't have to appear in court at a time when you should be performing an interesting operation. And there was certainly no difficulty about getting a girl. Nervousness and reticence were the chief barriers, and none of the Young Docs was nervous or reticent.

For my purposes, the Young Docs rapidly came down to Stew Jones—anyway, unless this affair turned out to be long, subtle and complicated.

Jack Lodge dragged me in a corner and told me, man to man, that in fact he had an alibi, but the girl concerned, woman rather, did not wish publicity for excellent reasons. For himself, he didn't give a damn. However, the matter was not to go on public record. If it became necessary for him to clear himself, privately, with me and nobody else, he undertook to do so.

Jinny knew who the woman was, he said. Jinny had gone to his room but no farther. Piqued, he had called the other woman, in Jinny's presence. And, surprisingly, she had arrived while Jinny was still there. Then Jinny had left.

It was untidy, it was unlikely, but it was almost certainly true.

Doc Stirling was by no conceivable reckoning the type to have murdered John Hogg. He was a Jekyll and Hyde, of course; drunk he was capable of anything. But it was beyond any doubting that he had not been drunk. I couldn't believe that after the incidents I knew about he had sat up and

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drunk himself, solitary, into madness.

Stew Jones, on the other hand, remained on my list.

He had been drunk. He had been nearly incapable, in fact. But everyone knew that he and John Hogg hated each other with a virulent loathing. Stew had brought out the worst side in John, which was easy, and John had brought out the worst side in Stew, which was difficult. And before further probing, it was pretty certain that the murder scheme was not a spur-of-the-moment business. The program card which had killed John had been in existence, I was certain, for weeks, days, certainly hours. The killer had waited for the precise moment when John was dead in his sights, and then pressed the trigger.

And Stew, though genuinely drunk, though sleepy, though he could not have foreseen the events of that evening, could have been quite capable of recognizing that the moment he'd been waiting for had arrived.

I don't say I tipped him as a hot favorite. I merely kept him in when I threw his pals out.

I saw Jinny only briefly, because she was on her way to night duty. What I saw neither interested me nor excited me, either personally or with regard to the killing.

She was a big, handsome girl, and 95 percent animal, with all the good and bad and indifferent attributes of animals. She was motherly and tender and generous and selfish and very strong. If a man really annoyed her, she might possibly break his back. As John's ingenious killer, she was ludicrously miscast.

She confirmed what Jack had said about the unknown woman, though she too refused to give her name. From her slightly amused, slightly contemptuous manner, I guessed that the woman, whoever she was, was rather an easy catch, and that Jinny had not been impressed by Jack's gesture.

So I left her out of my calculations. Only if developments made it necessary, would I insist on seeing her.

Bob was a bright, eager young scientist. He had the fresh-faced, recently-scrubbed look of an enthusiastic kid about ten years younger than he was.

He said: "Look, I've been waiting for you to come and see me. I couldn't say much before the guards. I just wanted to know that you weren't like . . . Dr. Spring, it's been hell since John was killed. Everybody *knows* I killed him."

"Everybody?"

"Not the commander. Not Lucy. Not Shirley. I don't think the Young Docs really believe it either, except that they've been thinking, like everybody else, and I guess what they've been thinking is:

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well, we didn't do it, so who did?"

"It's a good question," I agreed. "Why did you kill John, Bob?"

He blinked. Like many men who must be brilliant, he didn't give the impression of being very bright.

"Suppose you were prosecuting yourself," I said. "What motive could you did up?"

After a moment he gulped and said: "If I was prosecuting myself, I'd get hung."

"Yes?"

"Well—I was the one who had most reason to want John out of the way—"

"I've heard about that."

"Here's something you haven't heard. Shirley is . . . well, Shirley is a sham. Lucy . . . well, no guy who knew her once would ever let her go. I've always been crazy for her. But she fastened onto John. Look, I had to have Lucy. I *have* to have Lucy. And without John on the scene, I guess I'll get her. And Shirley can fade into the ghost she is—"

"So you get John's job and you get John's girl."

"But I didn't kill John. And now I want to prove it."

"That will be quite easy?"

"By a further truth-drug test, yes. I don't know if you've heard about this, but when we had that test I meant to throw the whole thing open. It was Lucy's idea that all anyone had any right to expect of us was to be questioned up to the last time we saw John. She said it was a matter of principle," Bob explained."

"Why did you agree? Why should you do as Lucy tells you?"

"At the time I didn't know how bad it was going to be. I didn't know I was going to be treated as if I'd been tried and found guilty, only because of some technicality I had to be allowed to walk around free. It's all right for Lucy. Nobody thinks she did it—how could she, when everybody knows I'm the killer?"

He took a deep breath. "I'm going to ask for another test. I'm to be questioned concerning the period from the time I last saw John to the time I was wakened and told he was dead."

"And that will prove?"

"That Shirley and I had a brief row, that I tried to go to her room with her—fat chance—that I then went to bed and slept. That I saw no robot and had no contact of any kind with human or robot that could have triggered the events that led to John's death."

He was earnest, and I realized that the test he was talking about, although it would no doubt be carried through, was totally unnecessary.

Bob wasn't bluffing.

So there was another call I had to make. There was, after all, another personality involved. And personality was the right word—if you were a robot man.

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It was very difficult to get access to the Mother Robot. The difficulties were general, not particular. Kids aren't encouraged to play spacemen and monsters in bank vaults, or radar control points, or nuclear power stations, or the drive rooms of spaceships.

"People I know must have worked on the Mother," I told the commander patiently. "Maybe I even did some of the work on her myself. A much more likely assignment that would have brought me out here was checking on the Mother."

"I know, Dr. Spring, but . . . you'd guess if I didn't tell you—our Mother Robot is essential to all the main functions of this space station. She's computer, library, robot control and . . . and other things, all rolled into one."

"So?" I said.

"Only about twenty of us here are allowed access to the Mother. And as for visitors—"

"Commander, arrange for me to talk direct to General Deacon on Earth."

He hesitated. He was, I thought, a good commander. No good commander keeps calling HQ for authorization. That's for the nervous, queasy duds, the men who have got to the top by seniority and good fortune and avoidance of error—the men who are terrified of putting a foot wrong.

The others, like Commander Hogg, learn the other way. They like to feel a message in their name to HQ means something, deserves attention. Anything they can handle, they handle. They make decisions and they back them. They back their subordinates' decisions too.

As he was teetering on the brink, I said: "I'll give you another out. Delegate responsibility to Dr. Horace Hewitson. Then let me see him."

He was relieved. That was fine. I was a robotics man, Hewitson was a robotics man. And he was sure of Hewitson.

Hewitson was thinner in hair, body and human contact. He was glad to see me, but only because he thought I might perhaps be a better robotics man even than he was.

"I can't tell you about . . ." he began, and I didn't bother to listen.

When the pause came, I said: "Horace, you don't have to tell me. The setup here would be obvious to any child of two who'd ever had a toy robot to play with."

He was pleased; he was delighted. Very correct was Horace, but very amenable (like a robot) if you knew how his mind worked. Tell him you had a checkmate in thirteen, and unlike any other chess player in the galaxy he wouldn't retort derisively that he could knock holes in any thirteen-move plan, but would follow you through the attack and if it con-

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vinced him, would happily resign and start again.

I told him. And he told me. Not much—I wasn't taking an unfair advantage. I had to tell him 95 percent before he'd admit the other five percent.

And the murder was never mentioned. Nor was John Hogg. Nor the secret purpose of the station.

And I never went near the Mother Robot. Not then, though an arrangement was made through Horace later.

Back with the commander (it was now midnight, space-station time), I said: "Commander, I'm going to give you one last chance. I've thought all along that knowledge of the basic purpose of this space station was essential to the solution of John's murder. Now I know. Are you going to tell me what John was working on?"

He was unshaken. "No," he said quietly. "I can't."

"Then you realize that I must end this affair my own way."

"What does that mean?"

"It means that if you're open with me, I can be open with you. If not, I have to be tough. Very tough. Either way, this thing's finished, apart from a few—"

"You know who killed John?"

I shrugged. "Oh, there was never much difficulty about that. That's not the point. I'm advising you, very strongly advising you, to take me into your confidence. If you don't . . ."

"Then what?"

I shrugged again. "All I can say, and it's not meant to be a threat, is that you'll wish you had."

He hesitated. He really thought about it. Then he shook his head. "Without authorization, I can't," he said finally.

"Then we'll go to the Mother Robot," I said. "You and I."

"What about Dr. Hewitson?"

"Have him present if you like. It won't make the slightest difference."

He was half doubtful, half confident. "It's a waste of time your going near the Mother," he said. "She won't deal with anyone who isn't—"

"Let's see, shall we?"

Because he was sure about that at least, we went to the Mother—without Hewitson. Horace's presence, as I'd told the commander, wouldn't have made the slightest difference.

The contact room was utterly unimpressive. There was nothing in it except coding machines, completely independent of the Mother, and a few slots and buttons. I used several of the coding machines, and the commander couldn't have seen what I was doing even if he watched over my shoulder, any more than you could read what a stenographer was typing if you couldn't see the paper in the machine. I fed cards into the Mother Robot, and got short, sharp replies, instantly.

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The commander was staring at me incredulously. He had never seen anyone communicate in such a way with the Mother Robot, with such visible results, and had not believed it was possible. And I wasn't even classified as a person who could program the Mother.

Finally the Mother spoke. In her own way, of course. She disgorged a sealed letter in a red envelope, addressed to the commander.

"Go ahead, read it," I said blandly. "I won't look over your shoulder."

He gave me a keen look. "You don't need to, do you?"

All I said was *"Security,"* and I managed to get such derisive scorn into the one word that the commander flushed as he broke the seals which would open only for him personally.

There was a long pause. Then he said: "I'm to assemble Lucy, Bob, Shirley, Jinny, Stew, Jack and Dod in the gymnasium where John's wrist was broken. You and I are to attend. Plus two guards, armed, two Class A robots and two Class B robots. The Mother will monitor through the Class A robots."

"I gave you your chance, commander," I said coolly, "and you wouldn't take it. Now I'm running the show—or the Mother Robot is. Comes to the same thing . . ."

"Does it?" he said.

"Somebody has to say it, so I will," said Lucy. "Well, we're all here."

There was nowhere to sit in the gymnasium. Nobody but me seemed to notice; I guess when you spend all your time in low-gravity conditions you don't bother about sitting down, because you never have to rest. You don't have to 'take the weight off your feet,' because there's hardly any.

The Young Docs had tried already to turn this into a farce, but the robots had silently separated them and restrained them, tacitly warning them that this was no undergrad party. Lucy, though bright, was thoughtful, guessing that something very unusual was happening, and quite certain (I guessed) that John's killer was going to be exposed before the robots unlocked the door which they had secured with a device of their own. She smelled of carbolic and wore a severe gray skirt and a white blouse which was meant to be neutral but on her never had a chance of making it. Jinny, as always in this affair, seemed to be wondering how she'd got mixed up in it. Seconded from hospital, she was in nurse's uniform and looked like a bewildered filly. Bob, in a white coat, seemed pleased and relieved. He, too, thought the business would soon be all over, and was glad of it. Shirley had used the urgency of the summons (and it was now about an hour after midnight) to appear in a lacy wrap

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over, apparently, nothing at all, and the wrap was fastened with one button, over her navel.

I had to say something; that was expected. I said: "This station is developing guided missiles with patterns controlled by the Mother Robot. The missiles themselves are deadly—that's simple enough to arrange. The new thing is that the Mother herself programs and equips the guiding mechanisms. Every pattern attack has plain velocity missiles which are simply shells aimed at the target; zigzag missiles which are equally automatic, but take a course which makes them hard to knock out; random homing missiles with detector devices, so that they—"

"Dr. Spring!" the commander shouted. "You can't do this. The things you're talking about are—"

"Secret," I said. "I know. And only you and Bob of the people here are supposed to know about them. Except for Lucy, in a limited way. Everybody else carries on with his or her job, banned from Section C and F, of course, and the Mother Robot . . . I guess this station has several other purposes too, though I haven't tried to find out what they are. If I had, I'd have found out all right. Security is silly."

I sighed.

"I guess for convenience you decided, commander, when this thing happened that it had nothing to do with the secret work of the station. Your reasoning was: *It can't be so, because it would be too awful if it was.*"

Jack barked with laughter.

"The truth is, John wasn't killed by anyone here. Not anybody. He was killed by the Mother Robot."

Some announcements make everybody speak at once. Others strike everybody dumb. This was one of the second kind.

They all sensed at once it was no use protesting, no use being incredulous. I knew what I was talking about, and they knew it.

I drove the point home. "If everybody here agreed to full questioning," I said, "it would be established that *no one* programed that M Class robot on the night John died . . . and *no one* prepared the card beforehand. The Mother Robot planned and executed the whole thing herself."

The commander was white and motionless. I understood some of what he felt, probably not all. It was, after all, his son who had died. And the Mother Robot was part of his station, the heart of it. Theoretically at least we were all under the control of, in the power of, the Mother Robot.

And the Mother Robot was present in the person of the Class A and B robots. She couldn't speak, but she could hear and understand. And the robots did nothing. They waited.

It was Bob who finally said something. "If this is so," he said

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puzzledly, "why are the robots here? And why isn't Hewitson here? Because technically he must be involved. I don't mean on any personal or deliberate level, but—"

"Hewitson is involved, as you say," I nodded. "I'm taking him back to Earth with me. You're mistaken, commander—the Mother Robot won't have to be replaced. It was the control that was wrong, not the machine. Under Bob, the Mother Robot will be—"

There was no warning. One of the robots simply reached out and broke Bob's neck. It was quicker than hanging. He was dead when he hit the floor.

I was to leave in five minutes.

I had flatly refused to say a word beyond assuring the commander that the Mother Robot under Hewitson was okay for the present and any changes in security or personnel or station organization would have to be made from Earth after I made my report, and not by me.

For a time this episode had made me sick, because despite the bright happy faces of the frigs (I was never going to learn why they were frigs), this was an unclean killing by unclean means in an unclean environment. It wasn't just because I was a robotics expert that I didn't blame the Mother Robot. As I'd said before I set foot in the station: "If a man's head was cut off with a saw, would you call in a carpenter to solve the mystery?"

Well, I, the carpenter, had solved the mystery. But that still didn't mean that the saw was guilty of murder.

Now I wasn't sick any more. I was merely glad to be quitting the incident and the station. I didn't want to see Lucy, or Jack, or Stew, or Shirley, or Jinny, or Dod, though none of them had been really involved except, indirectly, Lucy and Shirley.

Before I went I finally spoke to the commander—at the landing lock, with nobody present but a couple of technicians who took great care not to listen.

"You should have seen at once, commander," I said, "that none of those seven people would have arranged a murder in circumstances that limited responsibility to the group. Somebody outside the group, sure. Hewitson, maybe. He could have done it, but he didn't."

"I've been beating my brains out for the last eight hours," said the commander, "but I still can't see —"

"So I'll tell you," I said kindly. "It was sheer chance that John died when only, apparently, those seven could have been responsible for his death. It couldn't be anything else."

"Chance?" Understandably, he didn't want to believe it.

"Not very astonishing, at that. Granted the Mother Robot had

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picked this method of disposing of John—and the real killer wouldn't know a thing about the actual method—it was bound to be done when John was alone in the lab and only a limited number of people knew he was there."

"The real killer? There was a real killer? Bob?"

"Of course. When you start making robots for special purposes, and cutting out directives which are normally built in, you're asking for trouble . . . most of my report is going to be about that, by the way . . . The Mother Robot in this peculiar setup you have here is a man-killer, by order, so human death can't mean much to her. She's highly efficient, built to place efficiency before anything else. She's nearly autonomous, under only the guidance—but necessary guidance, as she knows very well—of about half a dozen men.

"Well, Bob's position was simple. He wanted Lucy and he wanted to get rid of Shirley. In his job, John was not only a nuisance, he was an obstacle. There's always somebody but for whom everything would be okay—and for Bob, John was that somebody.

"Bob's position was simple, but what he decided to do about it was not. We have to guess about this because Bob's dead and the Mother Robot won't talk. But we can get pretty close . . . In his work with the Mother he showed her that John was inefficient, that he was hampering the main project, that everything would get along better without him, that because of a thing called consanguinity, which the Mother was debarred from understanding, John could never be got rid of and would eventually be in sole charge of the Mother—"

"That's utter nonsense," the commander exclaimed.

"It's all utter nonsense. Or half truth, depending on the point of view . . ."

I wandered for a moment. "Autonomous man-killing robots, for Christ's sake . . . John did com-

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mit suicide in a way, commander. He should have known better than to have anything to do with a lunatic setup like this.

"Anyway," I went on firmly, "Bob managed to persuade the Mother that John was an enemy. And the rest followed. It was Bob's bad luck that when it happened, he was one of the main suspects. But perhaps that was inevitable. Part of the scheme must have been to implicate Shirley, but that didn't work out too well. Or else, in the circumstances, Bob abandoned that angle."

The commander was beginning to understand. "And you arranged that meeting to . . . ?"

"To let the Mother understand what had happened. It was impossible to prove anything against Bob. The Mother wouldn't give evidence, and there was no other evidence. What I did was show the Mother she'd been deliberately maneuvered by one of her helpers to destroy another one of her helpers. That wouldn't have made her kill again. But when I said Hewitson would be removed and Bob would be put in charge . . ."

There was a pause. I heard noises; the airlock was about to open and I'd be on my way.

"The Mother is heartless," I said, "but she *knows*. John really was a nuisance, or she'd never have killed him, Bob or no Bob. Hewitson is efficient. Bob isn't. Under Bob the Mother wouldn't be efficient. So . . ."

I said no more. The commander might have been turned to stone. He had a lot to think about: his station, the knowledge that the Mother Robot, unrestrained, unaltered, was still there, still in real physical command, the fact that the secrecy was gone and that my report would be dynamite . . . and the loss of his only son.

For me, the way was clear; I left.

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This story was one of the first sold by Jack London (to Black Cat *Magazine in 1899 for $40.00). London was 23 and had made his commitment to writing, but until this sale was "at the end of my tether . . . ready to go back to coal shovelling or ahead to suicide." Sixteen years and 50 published volumes later, Jack London was dead: having deliberately taken a lethal overdose of morphine sulphate.*

A THOUSAND DEATHS

by Jack London

I HAD BEEN IN THE WATER about an hour, and cold, exhausted, with a terrible cramp in my right calf, it seemed as though my hour had come. Fruitlessly struggling against the strong ebb tide, I had beheld the maddening procession of the water-front lights slip by; but now I gave up attempting to breast the stream and contented myself with the bitter thoughts of a wasted career, now drawing to a close.

It had been my luck to come of good, English stock, but of parents whose account with the bankers far exceeded their knowledge of child-nature and the rearing of children. While born with a silver spoon in my mouth, the blessed atmosphere of the home circle was to me unknown. My father, a very learned man and a celebrated antiquarian, gave no thought to his family, being constantly lost in the abstractions of his study; while my mother, noted far more for her good looks than her good sense, sated herself with the adulation of the society in which she was perpetually plunged. I went through the regular school and college routine of a boy of the English bourgeoisie, and as the years brought me increasing strength and passions, my parents suddenly became aware that I was possessed of an immortal soul, and endeavored to draw the curb. But it was too late; I perpetrated the wildest and most audacious folly, and was disowned by my people, ostracized by the society I had so long outraged, and with the thousand pounds my father gave me, with the declaration that he would

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neither see me again nor give me more, I took a first-class passage to Australia.

Since then my life had been one long peregrination—from the Orient to the Occident, from the Arctic to the Antarctic—to find myself at last, an able seaman at thirty, in the full vigor of my manhood, drowning in San Francisco bay because of a disastrously successful attempt to desert my ship.

My right leg was drawn up by the cramp, and I was suffering the keenest agony. A slight breeze stirred up a choppy sea, which washed into my mouth and down my throat, nor could I prevent it. Though I still contrived to keep afloat, it was merely mechanical, for I was rapidly becoming unconscious. I have a dim recollection of drifting past the sea-wall, and of catching a glimpse of an up-river steamer's starboard light; then everything became a blank.

I heard the low hum of insect life, and felt the balmy air of a spring morning fanning my cheek. Gradually it assumed a rhythmic flow, to whose soft pulsations my body seemed to respond. I floated on the gentle bosom of a summer's sea, rising and falling with dreamy pleasure on each crooning wave. But the pulsations grew stronger; the humming, louder; the waves, larger, fiercer—I was dashed about on a stormy sea. A great agony fastened upon me. Brilliant, intermittent sparks of light flashed athwart my inner consciousness; in my ears there was the sound of many waters; then a sudden snapping of an intangible something, and I awoke.

The scene, of which I was protagonist, was a curious one. A glance sufficed to inform me that I lay on the cabin floor of some gentleman's yacht, in a most uncomfortable posture. On either side, grasping my arms and working them up and down like pump handles, were two peculiarly clad, dark-skinned creatures. Though conversant with most aboriginal types, I could not conjecture their nationality. Some attachment had been fastened about my head, which connected my respiratory organs with the machine I shall next describe. My nostrils, however, had been closed, forcing me to breathe through the mouth. Foreshortened by the obliquity of my line of vision, I beheld two tubes, similar to small hosing but of different composition, which emerged from my mouth and went off at an acute angle from each other. The first came to an abrupt termination and lay on the floor beside me; the second traversed the floor in numerous coils, connecting with the apparatus I have promised to describe.

In the days before my life had become tangential, I had dabbled not a little in science, and, con-

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versant with the appurtenances and general paraphernalia of the laboratory, I appreciated the machine I now beheld. It was composed chiefly of glass, the construction being of that crude sort which is employed for experimentative purposes. A vessel of water was surrounded by an air chamber, to which was fixed a vertical tube, surmounted by a globe. In the center of this was a vacuum gauge. The water in the tube moved upward and downward, creating alternate inhalations and exhalations, which were in turn communicated to me through the hose. With this, and the aid of the men who pumped my arms so vigorously, had the process of breathing been artificially carried on, my chest rising and falling and my lungs expanding and contracting, till nature could be persuaded to again take up her wonted labor.

As I opened my eyes the appliance about my head, nostrils and mouth was removed. Draining a stiff three fingers of brandy, I staggered to my feet to thank my preserver, and confronted—my father. But long years of fellowship with danger had taught me self-control, and I waited to see if he would recognize me. Not so; he saw in me no more than a runaway sailor and treated me accordingly.

Leaving me to the care of the blackies, he fell to revising the notes he had made on my resuscitation. As I ate of the handsome fare served up to me, confusion began on deck, and from the chanteys of the sailors and the rattling of blocks and tackles I surmised that we were getting under way. What a lark! Off on a cruise with my recluse father into the wide Pacific! Little did I realize, as I laughed to myself, which side the joke was to be on. Aye, had I known, I would have plunged overboard and welcomed the dirty fo'k'sle from which I had just escaped.

I was not allowed on deck till we had sunk the Farallones and the last pilot boat. I appreciated this forethought on the part of my father and made it a point to thank him heartily, in my bluff seaman's manner. I could not suspect that he had his own ends in view, in thus keeping my presence secret to all save the crew. He told me briefly of my rescue by his sailors, assuring me that the obligation was on his side, as my appearance had been most opportune. He had constructed the apparatus for the vindication of a theory concerning certain biological phenomena, and had been waiting for an opportunity to use it.

"You have proved it beyond all doubt," he said; then added with a sigh, "But only in the small matter of drowning."

But, to take a reef in my yarn—he offered me an advance of two pounds on my previous wages to

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sail with him, and this I considered handsome, for he really did not need me. Contrary to my expectations, I did not join the sailors' mess, for'ard, being assigned to a comfortable stateroom and eating at the captain's table. He had perceived that I was no common sailor, and I resolved to take this chance for reinstating myself in his good graces. I wove a fictitious past to account for my education and present position, and did my best to come in touch with him. I was not long in disclosing a predilection for scientific pursuits, nor he in appreciating my aptitude. I became his assistant, with a corresponding increase in wages, and before long, as he grew confidential and expounded his theories, I was as enthusiastic as himself.

The days flew quickly by, for I was deeply interested in my new studies, passing my waking hours in his well-stocked library, or listening to his plans and aiding him in his laboratory work. But we were forced to forego many enticing experiments, a rolling ship not being exactly the proper place for delicate or intricate work. He promised me, however, many delightful hours in the magnificent laboratory for which we were bound. He had taken possession of an uncharted South Sea island, as he said, and turned it into a scientific paradise.

We had not been on the island long, before I discovered the horrible mare's nest I had fallen into. But before I describe the strange things which came to pass, I must briefly outline the causes which culminated in as startling an experience as ever fell to the lot of man.

Late in life, my father had abandoned the musty charms of antiquity and succumbed to the more fascinating ones embraced under the general head of biology. Having been thoroughly grounded during his youth in the fundamentals, he rapidly explored all the higher branches as far as the scientific world had gone, and found himself on the no man's land of the unknowable. It was his intention to pre-empt some of this unclaimed territory, and it was at this stage of his investigations that we had been thrown together. Having a good brain, though I say it myself, I had mastered his speculations and methods of reasoning, becoming almost as mad as himself. But I should not say this. The marvelous results we afterward obtained can only go to prove his sanity. I can but say that he was the most abnormal specimen of cold-blooded cruelty I have ever seen.

After having penetrated the dual mysteries of physiology and psychology, his thought had led him to the verge of a great field, for which, the better to explore, he began studies in higher organic chemistry, pathology, toxicology and other sciences and sub-sciences rendered kindred as accessories to his speculative hypotheses.

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Starting from the proposition that the direct cause of the temporary and permanent arrest of vitality was due to the coagulation of certain elements and compounds in the protoplasm, he had isolated and subjected these various substances to innumerable experiments. Since the temporary arrest of vitality in an organism brought coma, and a permanent arrest death, he held that by artificial means this coagulation of the protoplasm could be retarded, prevented, and even overcome in the extreme states of solidification. Or, to do away with the technical nomenclature, he argued that death, when not violent and in which none of the organs had suffered injury, was merely suspended vitality; and that, in such instances, life could be induced to resume its functions by the use of proper methods. This, then, was his idea: To discover the method—and by practical experimentation prove the possibility—of renewing vitality in a structure from which life had seemingly fled. Of course, he recognized the futility of such endeavor after decomposition had set in; he must have organisms which but the moment, the hour, or the day before, had been quick with life. With me, in a crude way, he had proved this theory. I was really drowned, really dead, when picked from the water of San Francisco bay—but the vital spark had been renewed by means of his aerotherapeutical apparatus, as he called it.

Now to his dark purpose concerning me. He first showed me how completely I was in his power. He had sent the yacht away for a year, retaining only his two blackies, who were utterly devoted to him. He then made an exhaustive review of his theory and outlined the method of proof he had adopted, concluding with the startling announcement that I was to be his subject.

I had faced death and weighed my chances in many a desperate venture, but never in one of this nature. I can swear I am no coward, yet this proposition of journeying back and forth across the borderland of death put the yellow fear upon me. I asked for time, which he granted, at the same time assuring me that but the one course was open—I must submit. Escape from the island was out of the question; escape by suicide was not to be entertained, though really preferable to what it seemed I must undergo; my only hope was to destroy my captors. But this latter was frustrated through the precautions taken by my father. I was subjected to a constant surveillance, even in my sleep being guarded by one or the other of the blacks.

Having pleaded in vain, I announced and proved that I was his son. It was my last card, and I had placed all my hopes upon it. But he was inexorable; he was not a father but a scientific machine. I

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wonder yet how it ever came to pass that he married my mother or begat me, for there was not the slightest grain of emotion in his make-up. Reason was all in all to him, nor could he understand such things as love or sympathy in others, except as petty weaknesses which should be overcome. So he informed me that in the beginning he had given me life, and who had better right to take it away than he? Such, he said, was not his desire, however; he merely wished to borrow it occasionally, promising to return it punctually at the appointed time. Of course, there was a liability of mishaps, but I could do no more than take the chances, since the affairs of men were full of such.

The better to insure success, he wished me to be in the best possible condition, so I was dieted and trained like a great athlete before a decisive contest. What could I do? If I had to undergo the peril, it were best to be in good shape. In my intervals of relaxation he allowed me to assist in the arranging of the apparatus and in the various subsidiary experiments. The interest I took in all such operations can be imagined. I mastered the work as thoroughly as he, and often had the pleasure of seeing some of my suggestions or alterations put into effect. After such events I would smile grimly, conscious of officiating at my own funeral.

He began by inaugurating a series of experiments in toxicology. When all was ready, I was killed by a stiff dose of strychnine and allowed to lie dead for some twenty hours. During that period my body was dead, absolutely dead. All respiration and circulation ceased; but the frightful part of it was, that while the protoplasmic coagulation proceeded, I retained consciousness and was enabled to study it in all its ghastly details.

The apparatus to bring me back to life was an air-tight chamber, fitted to receive my body. The mechanism was simple—a few valves, a rotary shaft and crank, and an electric motor. When in operation, the interior atmosphere was alternately condensed and rarefied, thus communicating to my lungs an artificial respiration without the agency of the hosing previously used. Though my body was inert, and, for all I knew, in the first stages of decomposition, I was cognizant of everything that transpired. I knew when they placed me in the chamber, and though all my senses were quiescent, I was aware of hypodermic injections of a compound to react upon the coagulatory process. Then the chamber was closed and the machinery started. My anxiety was terrible; but the circulation became gradually restored, the different organs began to carry on their respective functions, and in an hour's time I was eating a hearty dinner.

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It cannot be said that I participated in this series, nor in the subsequent ones, with much verve; but after two ineffectual attempts at escape, I began to take quite an interest. Besides, I was becoming accustomed. My father was beside himself at his success, and as the months rolled by his speculations took wilder and yet wilder flights. We ranged through the three great classes of poisons, the neurotics, the gaseous and the irritants, but carefully avoided some of the mineral irritants and passed the whole group of corrosives. During the poison regime I became quite accustomed to dying, and had but one mishap to shake my growing confidence. Scarifying a number of lesser blood vessels in my arm, he introduced a minute quantity of that most frightful of poisons, the arrow poison, or curare. I lost consciousness at the start, quickly followed by the cessation of respiration and circulation, and so far had the solidification of the protoplasm advanced, that he gave up all hope. But at the last moment he applied a discovery he had been working upon, receiving such encouragement as to redouble his efforts.

In a glass vacuum, similar but not exactly like a Crookes' tube, was placed a magnetic field. When penetrated by polarized light, it gave no phenomena of phosphorescence nor of rectilinear projection of atoms, but emitted non-luminous rays, similar to the X ray. While the X ray could reveal opaque objects hidden in dense mediums, this was possessed of far subtler penetration. By this he photographed my body, and found on the negative an infinite number of blurred shadows, due to the chemical and electric motions still going on. This was an infallible proof that the rigor mortis in which I lay was not genuine; that is, those mysterious forces, those delicate bonds which held my soul to my body, were still in action. The resultants of all other poisons were unapparent, save those of mercurial compounds, which usually left me languid for several days.

Another series of delightful experiments was with electricity. We verified Tesla's assertion that high currents were utterly harmless by passing 100,000 volts through my body. As this did not affect me, the current was reduced to 2,500, and I was quickly electrocuted. This time he ventured so far as to allow me to remain dead, or in a state of suspended vitality, for three days. It took four hours to bring me back.

Once, he superinduced lockjaw; but the agony of dying was so great that I positively refused to undergo similar experiments. The easiest deaths were by asphyxiation, such as drowning, strangling, and suffocation by gas; while those by morphine, opium, cocaine and chloroform, were not at all hard.

Another time, after being suffo-

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cated, he kept me in cold storage for three months, not permitting me to freeze or decay. This was without my knowledge, and I was in a great fright on discovering the lapse of time. I became afraid of what he might do with me when I lay dead, my alarm being increased by the predilection he was beginning to betray toward vivisection. The last time I was resurrected, I discovered that he had been tampering with my breast. Though he had carefully dressed and sewed the incisions up, they were so severe that I had to take to my bed for some time. It was during this convalescence that I evolved the plan by which I ultimately escaped.

While feigning unbounded enthusiasm in the work, I asked and received a vacation from my moribund occupation. During this period I devoted myself to laboratory work, while he was too deep in the vivisection of the many animals captured by the blacks to take notice of my work.

It was on these two propositions that I constructed my theory: First, electrolysis, or the decomposition of water into its constituent gases by means of electricity; and, second, by the hypothetical existence of a force, the converse of gravitation, which Astor has named "apergy." Terrestrial attraction, for instance, merely draws objects together but does not combine them; hence, apergy is merely repulsion. Now, atomic or molecular attraction not only draws objects together but integrates them; and it was the converse of this, or a disintegrative force, which I wished to not only discover and produce, but to direct at will. Thus, the molecules of hydrogen and oxygen reacting on each other, separate and create new molecules, containing both elements and forming water. Electrolysis causes these molecules to split up and resume their original condition, producing the two gases separately. The force I wished to find must not only do this with two, but with all elements, no matter in what compounds they exist. If I could then entice my father within its radius, he would be instantly disintegrated and sent flying to the four quarters, a mass of isolated elements.

It must not be understood that this force, which I finally came to control, annihilated matter; it merely annihilated form. Nor, as I soon discovered, had it any effect on inorganic structure; but to all organic form it was absolutely fatal. This partiality puzzled me at first, though had I stopped to think deeper I would have seen through it. Since the number of atoms in organic molecules is far greater than in the most complex mineral molecules, organic compounds are characterized by their instability and the ease with which they are split up by physical forces and chemical reagents.

By two powerful batteries, con-

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nected with magnets constructed specially for this purpose, two tremendous forces were projected. Considered apart from each other, they were perfectly harmless; but they accomplished their purpose by focusing at an invisible point in mid-air. After practically demonstrating its success, besides narrowly escaping being blown into nothingness, I laid my trap. Concealing the magnets, so that their force made the whole space of my chamber doorway a field of death, and placing by my couch a button by which I could throw on the current from the storage batteries, I climbed into bed.

The blackies still guarded my sleeping quarters, one relieving the other at midnight. I turned on the current as soon as the first man arrived. Hardly had I begun to doze, when I was aroused by a sharp, metallic tinkle. There, on the mid-threshold, lay the collar of Dan, my father's St. Bernard. My keeper ran to pick it up. He disappeared like a gust of wind, his clothes falling to the floor in a heap. There was a slight whiff of ozone in the air, but since the principal gaseous components of his body were hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen, which are equally colorless and odorless, there was no other manifestation of his departure. Yet when I shut off the current and removed the garments, I found a deposit of carbon in the form of animal charcoal; also other powders, the isolated, solid elements of his organism, such as sulphur, potassium and iron. Resetting the trap, I crawled back to bed. At midnight I got up and removed the remains of the second blacky, and then slept peacefully till morning.

I was awakened by the strident voice of my father, who was calling to me from across the laboratory. I laughed to myself. There had been no one to call him and he had overslept. I could hear him as he approached my room with the intention of rousing me, and so I sat up in bed, the better to observe his translation—perhaps apotheosis were a better term. He paused a moment at the threshold, then took the fatal step. Puff! It was like the wind sighing among the pines. He was gone. His clothes fell in a fantastic heap on the floor. Besides ozone, I noticed the faint, garlic-like odor of phosphorus. A little pile of elementary solids lay among his garments. That was all. The wide world lay before me. My captors were not.

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Having recently had pointed out to us the damage we may have caused our 2½-year-old by allowing her to observe the cursory funeral arrangements for the family goldfish (i.e., flushing the thing down the john), it was good to come across this example of a child-rearing hazard which has yet to be defined and categorized by the ladies' magazines.

DONNY BABY

by Susan Trott

JOHN AND MARISE SHANDLER belonged to the class of people who grow avocado-trees. They are creative people but not so creative that they are failures. They are successful in their work and in their homes and both places are important to them. The men are architects or commercial artists or editors. The women wear Marimekko dresses, have red enamelware in the kitchen, sew, weave, or do stitchery, and grow avocado trees.

John Shandler was an architect. Upon graduating from the Harvard School of Design, he married Marise. She had not been one of the crowd in Cambridge. He found her in a little town in Nebraska which happened to be his home town, but he formed, molded, and finished her until, in no time, she was one of them. He swathed her in the vivid designs of Marimekko fabric, grew her hair, and ceased her lipstick. She became interesting and attractive, took up stitchery and kept her yarns in a large straw basket on the bookcase over the complete Corbusier. The yarns were in splendorous hues of orange, fuchsia, purple and lime. (On the quiet, Marise did a little piece in pale yellow, maize, sienna, and grey, which was a great pleasure to her and which she sent to her mother in Nebraska.)

Marise looked well and did well. She learned Chinese cooking and enclosed her dinners in the pure lines of Design Research china. She selected records with unerring taste to play on the Hi Fi that John built, and she never drank more than a sensible amount of liquor out of the gorgeous Mexican glass-

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ware. But she could not grow an avocado tree.

To grow an avocado tree, one takes the seed from an avocado pear and sticks toothpicks out of its middle to support it in a glass of water, point side up so that the wide end drinks in the water and the pointed end breathes in the air. Weeks later, roots issue from the base and droop down into the water and, still later, the green seedling itself comes thrusting up from the seed point. The marvelously slender stem reaches for the ceiling and lets out leaves in a random arrangement along the way.

Imagine! For the first year of their marriage, Marise tried to start the seed point side down into the water.

The discovery of this horticultural error occasioned their first marital quarrel.

"How could you be so stupid? I can't understand it," cried John, flinging himself about their living room in something like dispair.

Marise was silent and chagrined but wondered at his getting so excited about it.

"No one ever told me that the point side should be up," she explained softly. "All our friends already have their seeds in earth, except for Michael, and his seed was already started so it wasn't apparent about the ends."

"Egad!" said John throwing his head back with a hand to his brow. "It's too much. Think of all the people that have seen it there with the Goddamned point down in the water. If it wasn't for Michael, we might have gone on that way for years. Michael was good enough to mention it to me."

"I hope he took you off in a corner," said Marise.

John wheeled about and glared at her. It was not like Marise to be ironic. But she still looked suitably chagrined.

Then she said: "They don't even grow avocados, you know."

"What?"

"These trees. I could grow one ten feet high and it still wouldn't grow avocados."

John looked at her wildly, then he said carefully and distinctly as if he was talking to a foreigner, "We are not growing it so as to save money on avocados."

"Why are we growing it?"

"For the room. The room needs it. It is a wonderful plant and you can't buy it at a florist."

"Kind of like some people have Icons, Buddhas, or Crucifixes in their homes . . ."

"No. It isn't like that at all for God's sake. I'm not going to worship a plant."

"I wonder," she said musingly. "If design is your religion, perhaps the avocado tree is your deity. You all have it in your homes."

"Our homes," he corrected her.

She blushed. "Yes, of course. Our homes." Making amends now, she said sweetly. "Don't be harsh

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with me. I am sorry about the year lost. I will try again with the point up. I will try very hard to grow this plant for our room."

"Fine."

"Still, it is nice to grow something fertile, so while I'm at it I'm going to grow a baby."

"We are!" he said, not correcting her pronoun but being excited.

"Yes, we are," she said, smiling. "He's due in June."

Marise was able to wear the voluminous Marimekko dresses through her first six months, but then it was necessary for her to buy some roomier outfits. Despite all injunctions to invest in Arabic diellabahs, Mexican serapes, and Peruvian ponchos, Marise quietly drifted across the river to Macy's and bought maternity clothes. She bought cottons and ginghams in soft pastels; some even had lace at the cuffs and throat. When she brought them out to show John, he was at first worried, then enchanted. She looked very feminine. Her long hair was difficult to arrange so she cut it short, and it curled a little, but even this was all right with John. He thought her adorable, and he was very solicitous of her happiness during these last months. He was charming to her even though she had not yet had any luck with avocado seeds, a row of which sat in water in dark places with their points relentlessly up.

One day at the beginning of her seventh month, their friend Michael came by with a seed.

"Look, Marise," he said. "This one is just bursting to go. It's golden. I promise you. Give it a try."

She did. She threw out her other, hapless seeds and set Michael's in water, point up, in a dark corner. Two weeks later it let down a root. Marise and John stood before it, grinning and hugging each other. They were really happy about it.

In another two weeks, it had so many roots hanging down, Marise said, "It looks like a jelly fish."

John turned to her with a startled, slightly offended look.

"You know how some jelly fish have all those strings hanging down," she explained quickly.

Together they peered at the top of the seed. "It should sprout soon," they said equably.

But it didn't sprout soon. All those roots like jelly fish strings but no green seedling. They grew anxious. They conferred with Michael. He told them to be patient.

Then, two weeks before her time, Marise went off to the hospital. In the early hours of the morning, she was wheeled out of the delivery room with a bundle in her arms, and she told John in a soft triumphant voice, "It's a boy."

Later that day, John came to her room and told her much in the same voice she had used, "It's sprouted."

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At this, they were both overjoyed, amazed and, aware young moderns though they were, somewhat spooked.

After talking themselves out about the baby they fell silent, both thinking the same thing. "It is curious about the seed sprouting at the same time," Marise murmured. "Almost as if it held off for the birth of the baby."

"Or that the birth was hastened for the sprouting of the seed," said John.

Michael drove them home from the hospital. "This is Donny Baby," said Marise, smiling.

"And wait until you see what we have at home," said John.

As the months passed, they fussed over the baby a great deal and fussed over the avocado plant almost as much. Michael, now a close friend of the family, watched jealously over the growth of babe and tree, with many constructive suggestions about both. He, however, did not connect the two lives and was astonished one day to find Marise almost in tears over the plant. "Why, what's the matter, Marise? Your tree is doing fine."

"The stem . . . the stem seems to be growing crooked."

"That's easily corrected. Just turn it around occasionally so that each side gets the light. It leans to the light, you see."

Her face cleared. "Oh, thank goodness, there is nothing wrong with it. I was worried for the baby."

"For the baby?"

"Yes. I was afraid he might grow crooked. They're twins, you see."

"Come off it, Marise."

"But it's true. That's why I worry so over the plant. I feel that if anything happened to it, then Donny . . ." She looked at him, shrugged helplessly, then clasped her hands over her breast, gazing at the plant.

Michael went to John and told him of this singular conversation with Marise. He was appalled to find him of the same mind. "Haven't you noticed," he inquired of Michael, "that when the plant gets a leaf, Donny gets a tooth?" He laughed a strained laugh. "It's really quite remarkable."

"You're both crazy," said Michael. And he left.

Another time, he was visiting and he saw that the avocado, which was then two feet high and rooted in earth, looked wilted.

"What's the matter with it? Have you been giving it too much water?"

"Just a childhood disease. It's getting better now. Donny Baby's getting over the measles. The same thing happened when he had the mumps."

"You know," Michael said seriously. "This is a very unhealthy belief of yours. What if you began to reverse your thinking and began to believe as well that your son's health hinged on the plant's?"

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"But it does! One day a leaf got a split in it somehow, and that same day Donny cut his hand. Really Michael! Truly. I know it sounds incredible but it's true. Tell him John."

"Yes," said John. "It has happened enough times not to be coincidence."

As the months passed, Michael realized that it was not coincidence. Nor were John and Marise as sanguine about the phenomena as they sounded. They both appeared perpetually anxious. As who would not be that believed the life of a child depended on the life of a plant? Michael, like a sensible man, saw that it was all a delusion that never would have got under way had it not been for the fluke of the simultaneous birth and sprouting and the vulnerability of their minds at that tremulous, sensitive hour. Nevertheless he could not reject the actual related occurances between plant and child, and he could only explain it to himself as some kind of autosuggestion put into effect by the strength of their belief.

One day Marise called him, her voice hysterically high. "Help us, Michael! Donny Baby is terribly sick and the doctor can do nothing. You must see to the plant. It has some blight."

Donny, now two and a half, was delirious and had been sick for a week. The avocado, now almost four feet high, was losing its leaves. Every day another leaf or two fell off, and each day Donny grew more ill. Michael talked to florists and finally to the horticultural society and was instructed by them to bathe the leaves and stem several times a day with a prescribed solution. They did this. The leaves stopped falling off and, very gradually, the plant recovered. As did Donny Baby.

Michael was furious, exasperated, and concerned. He pleaded with his friends, "Let me take this plant out of your home. You'll both end up in the loony bin if you keep this up. Once the plant is gone you will stop thinking like this, and Donny will be a fine, healthy boy who, like any boy, will be sometimes sick, sometimes well. Let me take the plant now: today."

But they were afraid. They had visions of Donny disappearing on the same day. They could not agree to it. And they went about thin and anxious.

One Saturday when Donny was three years old, Michael was watching him for the afternoon while John and Marise went to a gallery opening. Although nothing dramatic had taken place since the blight, Michael was still stirred up about the plant and the aberration it had induced in the minds of his friends. While Donny played in his room, Michael paced the floor, glowering at the avocado.

It's all my fault, he thought. I should never have brought the seed

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to Marise. She never would have grown one had it not been for my seed. No more than if she'd tried to grow a tree from a stone. And it is I who have kept the damned thing alive. I have kept it alive and it grew from my seed. Therefore it is my plant and, if it is mine . . . it is mine to destroy. Yes! Ah Ha! Just so. I can destroy it and I will. Michael turned to the tree, beaming with pleasure, rubbing his hands together like a melodrama villain.

He thought, possibly it will mean the end of our friendship, but I rather think not. When they see that Donny is alive and hale, then I think that they will enjoy an enormous relief. They will see that it was all a hang-up. They will laugh and then cry and then hug Donny Baby and hug me and then we will all get stupendously drunk. All except Donny. Yes. That is the thing to do. The plant must be struck down. It must be done. I am duty bound to do it because I am the only one rational enough to do it.

Michael went to the kitchen and got a butcher knife. He returned to the plant and paused before it, studying it out. Probably the best thing to do would be to whack it off at the stem which was now almost a trunk, then chop it all into little pieces, including the roots. He raised the knife, then hesitated.

In the nursery, Donny recoiled and crouched trembling in the corner. He threw his arms over his face, hiding his eyes, which were starting from his head with a nameless terror. Then he uncurled himself. He relaxed. He went back to his playing. While Michael hearing steps in the hall, hastily returned the knife to the kitchen muttering, "Foiled! Foiled!" so absorbed was he in his role.

His friends burst in, radiant with the pleasure of an afternoon away and now of being returned to their delightful home.

"Hello, Michael. We're home," called John. "How did everything go?"

"How was Donny Baby?" asked Marise. "Was he good?" Even as she spoke, her eyes darted to the plant in a reflex.

Donny came running to his mother, and she scooped him into her arms.

"He was a good boy," said Michael. "He plays so quietly. I even got a bit of work done." He gestured to some books. "It is really nice to be here in this capacity. I hope you'll ask me again."

"Oh, Michael, you are so nice!"

"How about next Saturday," said Michael. "Wasn't there a concert you wanted to attend?"

"Why yes, there was. Do you really mean it?"

"I really do."

"Why, then, that would be wonderful," she said. "Just wonderful."

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SCIENCE

THE GREAT BORNING

by Isaac Asimov

BACK IN 1950, IMMANUEL VELIKOVSKY published a book called "Worlds in Collision" that was a nine-days-wonder. For a while, it ranked with flying saucers as a topic of conversation, while orthodox astronomers foamed at the mouth.

Velikovsky, you see, felt that Venus was a late acquisition of the Solar system. A little over three thousand years ago (he maintained) it was spewed out by Jupiter. It sailed through the inner Solar system, spending some time quite close to Earth, and, eventually, settled down in its present orbit.

The close approach of Venus and Earth brought about a series of catastrophes which were recorded in the Bible (according to Velikovsky) as the Egyptian plagues that accompanied the Israelite Exodus. Velikovsky also felt that it was Venus's influence that stopped the Earth's rotation for a bit, and that this is mentioned in the Bible at the point where the Sun and Moon paused in the sky in order that Joshua might win a battle.

Of course, I didn't take "Worlds in Collision" seriously for a moment (even though it is fascinating reading). What edged my skepticism most was the thought of Earth experiencing so drastic an event as the halting of its rotation with so little consequence. Life seemed to continue right through it, and civilizations were not even disrupted. Despite Velikovsky's talk about legends and vague poetical passages in the psalms, there are no clear references in historic annals to any odd astronomical manifestations about 1200 B.C. The oddest point of all is that Joshua's army watched the Sun and Moon come to a halt and, despite

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the fact that this meant Earth's rotation had ceased, never even fell off their feet. They would have done so if a bus had braked suddenly!

One cannot get from "Worlds in Collision" an adequate picture of what catastrophe on an astronomic scale *really* is.

It was with a certain grim pleasure, therefore, that I discovered a description of a possible astronomic event very much like that postulated by Velikovsky, but with much more realistic consequences.

In order to lay the background properly, however, we must go back to an English surveyor, William Smith, in the closing years of the 18th Century. In those years, England was interlacing itself with canals, since the railroad had not yet been invented, and Smith was employed in connection with some of the construction. At excavation sites, he could not help but notice the manner in which different kinds of rocks were arranged in parallel layers, or "strata."

Others had observed this, too, but Smith went further. He noted that each stratum had its particular types of fossils and maintained that particular strata could be identified by their fossil content even though geological processes had bent, twisted, eroded and otherwise interrupted the smooth continuity that must have existed originally. Smith made this important point in a book published in 1816.

It had always seemed reasonable that in any one place, those strata of rock that were deeper under the surface were also older. Now, however, it became possible to correlate the strata in one place with those in a far distant place by fossil content. The science of "stratigraphy" was born.

In the 18th Century, early geologists had already decided that the strata could be divided into three broad groups. The lowermost and oldest was known as the Primary, above it was the Secondary, and higher still was the Tertiary. That was as straightforward surely, as one, two, three. (In 1829, a fourth division, more recent than any of the others, and, indeed, virtually contemporary in comparison, was named, inevitably, Quaternary.)

The division, however, was not very useful, for one could not always tell from geological considerations alone whether strata were Primary, Secondary or Tertiary. The processes of mountain-building and erosion badly jumbled the layers. By using the fossil content as the key, however, all became clear (well, nearly all); and so it was only right that the strata receive new names referring to the fossils.

This was carried through by a group of British geologists who dominated the early "heroic age" of the science.

One of them, Adam Sedgwick (under whom Charles Darwin stud-

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ied), suggested the name "Paleozoic" for the Primary strata, and "Cenozoic" for the Tertiary plus Quaternary strata. These are from Greek words meaning "ancient life" and "recent life" respectively.

Another English geologist, John Phillips, a nephew of William Smith, rushed in with "Mesozoic" ("middle life") for the Secondary strata.

These broad-beamed divisions are the geological eras, and we therefore have, reading from old to recent, the Paleozoic Era, the Mesozoic Era, and the Cenozoic Era.

The division is particularly neat from the standpoint of evolution, as is to be expected since it was built up out of the consideration of fossils. The Paleozoic was the great age of the fish, for the dry land was barren at its start and was just being colonized in its later stages. In the Mesozoic, the dry land was fully conquered, and it was the heyday of the reptiles—the time of the dinosaurs. Finally, the Cenozoic represents the age of the mammals, and we still live in the Cenozoic today.

Naturally, as the strata were studied more carefully, it became possible to divide each era into periods, each period into epochs, each epoch into ages and so on. I won't delve into more than a few of the divisions.

The periods of an era (and the finer divisions also) were often named after the region in which the strata studied were of the type that were sufficiently undisturbed to allow the distinctions to be made. Since British geologists dominated the science in the generation following Smith, many of the place names are to be found in Great Britain.

Thus, the Paleozoic Era was eventually divided into six periods which, in order of decreasing age, are: Cambrian, Ordovician, Silurian, Devonian, Carboniferous and Permian. Of these, four memorialize British regions.

Indeed the only period of the Paleozoic that does not refer to a region is the Carboniferous. That was the first to be named, in 1822, by two Englishmen, the aforementioned John Phillips, together with William Daniel Conybeare. They introduced the term before the habit of naming for regions had been set.

The name is all the better for that, since it describes an important characteristic of the period. The name means "coal-producing," and it is the Carboniferous strata that contain the great coal seams. The Carboniferous period is, however, divided into two epochs which I shall name because they represent American regions and were introduced by American geologists. The earlier is the Mississippian (named for the river, not the state, and originating out of investigations in Illinois and Iowa) and the later is the Pennsylvanian.

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You may be wondering by now which four represent British regions, and you may not be at all helped if I tell you that three involve Wales. If so, that is because you are not taking into account the determined classicism of the 19th Century British scholars.

Sedgwick was studying the strata in parts of Wales and, in 1835, suggested the earliest rocks of the Paleozoic be named for that nation. But he used the Latin name, Cambria, and thus we now speak of the Cambrian period.

Still another British geologist, Sir Roderick Impey Murchison, also investigated the rocks of Wales and, in 1839, published his results. He named his period after the Silures, a tribe of Britons who had once inhabited South Wales and who are mentioned in Caesar's Commentaries.

This particular tribe appealed to British pride, for they had resisted the Roman invasion strongly. Their leader, Caractacus, had fought off the Romans for years until finally captured in 50 A.D. (Gilbert and Sullivan enthusiasts must already be thinking that the modern Major General boasted he could "tell you every detail of Caractacus's uniform" —yes, *that* Caractacus.) Anyway, Murchison's strata are now known as belonging to the Silurian period.

In that same year, Murchison and Sedgwick, in collaboration, studied the rock structure in Devon, an English shire just south of Wales across the Bristol channel. Those strata came to represent the Devonian period.

Finally, forty years later, in 1879, another English geologist, Charles Lapworth, managed to distinguish a group of strata that included the latest Cambrian and earliest Silurian, as previously defined. He demonstrated these strata to deserve a period to themselves and it became the Ordovician period. Whereas the Silurian had been named for a tribe in South Wales, the Ordovician was named, symmetrically enough, for the Ordovices, a contemporary tribe in north Wales.

The sixth period of the Paleozoic is the only one to call in a region outside Great Britain. It is the Permian period, and it is named for Perm, a city in the Urals, deep within Russia and on the border of Siberia. How on Earth, you must wonder, did the Russians intrude into the British preserves of the Paleozoic?

They didn't. It was rather the other way around. Murchison, having nosed his way across Wales and Devon, came to head a geological survey into the Urals, and he continued the regional naming even in Russia.

The Mesozoic Era is divided into three periods, which in order of decreasing age are the Triassic, the Jurassic and the Cretaceous, and for these names we must thank the Germans and French.

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The third and youngest of these periods was the earliest named. Like the Carboniferous, it was named in 1822, well before the regional habit began. Like the Carboniferous, too, the Cretaceous was named for its contents. The French geologist, Omalius d'Halloy, found the deposits he was studying to contain a high chalk content, and he therefore named them as belonging to the Cretaceous period (from a Greek word meaning "chalky"). The famous white chalk cliffs of Dover are Cretaceous.

In 1829, however, another French geologist, Alexandre Brogniart, was studying strata that were earlier than the Cretaceous. He was working in the Jura mountains on the French-Swiss border, and it seemed the most natural thing in the world to speak of the Jurassic period.

In 1834, a German geologist, Friedrich August von Alberti, was studying still earlier strata which, it seemed to him, were easily divisible into three layers. From the Greek word for "three" and influenced by the earlier name "Jurassic," von Alberti introduced the Triassic period.

The Cenozoic Era is divided into two periods, which keep their older-fashioned names, the Tertiary and the Quaternary.

The former is divided into five epochs with a beautiful set of repetitive names: Paleocene, Eocene, Oligocene, Miocene, and Pliocene* in order of decreasing age.

Three of these names were introduced by the British geologist, Sir Charles Lyell, in 1833. These were the Eocene, Miocene, and Pliocene. Their meanings, from the Greek, might be given, rather freely, as "the beginning of the recent," "a bit of the recent" and "more of the recent."

In 1854, however, the German geologist, Heinrich Ernst Beyrich, decided the section between the Eocene and Miocene deserved an epoch all its own. He kept to the pattern by calling it the Oligocene ("a little bit of the recent").

So did the German botanist, Wilhelm Philipp Schimper, who, in 1874, decided that the plant fossils in the earliest Eocene were sufficiently distinct to deserve an epoch of their own. He introduced the Paleocene ("the very beginning of the recent").

The Quaternary period is almost entirely a single epoch, which fits prettily into the epochs of the Tertiary. It is the Pleistocene, a term introduced by Lyell (which is why it fits), and it means "most recent."

But Lyell also gave a name to the final epoch, dating from the end of the Ice Age, and therefore only a few thousand years old, so far. Abandoning all Greek, he called it simply, Recent.

** I sometimes wonder how long it will be before some geologist, delivering a popular lecture, will rattle off these names and then add, straight-faced, "And then, of course, we have the modern, or Obscene, epoch."*

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There is the list of the eras and the epochs, which must not be taken as marked off distinctly in the rocks. They are man-made divisions and melt into each other more or less gradually. The disappearance of some types of fossils and the appearance of others mark the division, but there are always numerous types of fossils that march across the dividing line.

The sharpest recent dividing line is that marking the end of the Cretaceous and the beginning of the Tertiary. It was a time of a "Great Dying" as all the various groups of dinosaurs and related reptiles perished, both in the sea and on land. Over a very short time, geologically speaking, there was a complete revolution, and where reptiles had been supreme, a suddenly expanding mammalian order dominated the land.

So sudden was the changeover that reasons have been desperately sought to account for it. Men have offered climatic changes, mountain building, parasite diseases, all sorts of things to explain it, but the solution has not yet been found.

The sharp ending of the Cretaceous is, however, only the second most remarkable dividing line in geological history. The most remarkable is the beginning of the Cambrian some 600 million years ago. That was a time of a "Great Borning" (or whatever the opposite of "Great Dying" might be).

Rocks that are older than the Cambrian contain no fossils, while the Cambrian rocks swarm with them. Over a relatively short period of time, geologically speaking, life appeared in great variety, with representatives of every modern phylum except Chordata (the one to which we belong).

One might argue that it was shortly before the opening of the Cambrian that life developed, and that the geological record merely marks the beginning of life. If this were so, then life would be a recent phenomenon indeed. The rocks that must have seemed terribly ancient to Sedgwick, Murchison and company, have been found to be far more ancient than they thought, but they still stretch back only some 600 million years and that is not much in the lifetime of an Earth that is at least 4,700 million years old. Life would then have occupied Earth only during the final eighth of its history.

Because of the absence of fossils, it is difficult to do anything much about rocks older than the Cambrian, and the entire seven-eighths of Earth's history before that time is sometimes called simply the pre-Cambrian era.

Yet there is something funny here. The Cambrian is *too* rich in life, and the life-forms are too advanced. It is inconceivable that there wasn't a long evolutionary history behind the complex trilobites that dominate the Cambrian oceans.

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Furthermore, there *are* faint traces of life in rocks that are as much as 2,000 million years old. No more, admittedly, than carbon deposits that might have originated from algae, but life is life. For that reason, geologists have taken to lumping the eras into still larger divisions called eons.

Everything from the beginning of the Cambrian makes up the Phanerozoic eon ("visible life"). Everything pre-Cambrian makes up the Cryptozoic eon ("hidden life"). Indeed, the pre-Cambrian is now divided into two eras. Those strata in which the earliest algae traces are found are said to belong to the Archeozoic era ("ancient life"). The later pre-Cambrian is the Proterozoic era ("early life").

Now we can summarize the names of the geological divisions mentioned in this article in the accompanying table.

It would seem, then, that the opening of the Cambrian marks not so much the beginning of life, as the rather sudden increase in complexity of life. What had previously been a system of soft-celled (perhaps microscopic) forms incapable of leaving a fossil record, suddenly became a variegated display of creatures with shells and armor, well-designed for preservation.

But why? Why, after a couple of billion years of soft-cell life did Earth's life-forms suddenly swell and flourish into a mighty stream of complexity? Two possible answers appeal to me: one chemical and one astronomical.

Sometime before the opening of the Cambrian period—to take the chemical explanation first—photosynthesis had been developed. Where previously, the ultimate source of life-energy had been the Sun's ultraviolet, which slowly built up complicated compounds in the ocean, the new photosynthesizing cells could make use of the visible light of the Sun. The Sun's radiation was richer in visible light than in ultraviolet, and the photosynthesizing cells flourished.

In the process of photosynthesis, oxygen was produced. This first consumed the reducing compounds of the atmosphere and then began to accumulate there as free oxygen.

Animal life developed which was capable of making use of the free oxygen that was suddenly to be found in the atmosphere and dissolved in the ocean water. Reactions making use of free oxygen liberate some twenty times as much energy per glucose molecule than do reactions not involving oxygen. Life found at its disposal, suddenly, a flood of energy in unprecedented quantity.

This did not happen all at once. The oxygen content of Earth's atmosphere rose slowly. By the opening of the Cambrian, it is estimated

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The Geological Divisions

Eons	*Eras*	*Periods*	*Epochs*
Phanerozoic	Cenozoic	Quaternary	Recent
			Pleistocene
		Tertiary	Pliocene
			Miocene
			Oligocene
			Eocene
			Paleocene
	Mesozoic	Cretaceous	
		Jurassic	
		Triassic	
	Paleozoic	Permian	
		Carboniferous	Pennsylvanian
			Mississippian
		Devonian	
		Silurian	
		Ordovician	
		Cambrian	
Cryptozoic (or pre-Cambrian)	Proterozoic		
	Archeozoic		

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that oxygen made up two percent of the air; that is, a tenth of the concentration now present. This marked a critical point, perhaps, a point at which oxygen-using reactions became practical, and the tidal wave of energy began to pour in.

The Cambrian, then, would mark the moment when life grew rich and luxurious, expanding in quantity, variety and complexity, out of what might almost be considered the sheer exuberance of being able to breathe.

The chemical explanation does not account for something else, however. The beginning of the Cambrian is marked by more than the transition to fossils. It is preceded by a period of strong erosion that may have lasted for 100 million years. The continents were ground down to virtual flatness. Neither before nor since, as far as we can tell, was the Earth's surface so generally low-lying and smooth.

Something seems to have gone over the Earth like a grindstone. The easiest explanation is that Earth had experienced a gigantic glacial period and that it had been the creeping glaciers that had smoothed the continents. Opposed to that, however, are certain chemical characteristics of the rocks of the period which seem to imply that this period in geological history was rather warm and could not have been glacial.

So we turn to the astronomical theory, to account for this sharp geological boundary before the Cambrian (such a boundary is called an "unconformity").

In my article JUST MOONING AROUND (*F & SF*, May 1963), I pointed out that the Moon did not have the characteristics of a satellite but seemed to be an independent planet, circling the Sun in our company.

This thought has occurred to others as well, apparently, and the interesting possibility is now being bruited about that the Moon became associated with ourselves not in the early dawn of the history of the Solar system, but comparatively recently.

Not recently, you understand in Velikovskian terms, but recently enough. The suggestion is that the Moon was captured by the Earth about 1000 million years ago and that the Earth, for about three-quarters of its history, had, like Venus, been without a satellite. (Where the Moon came from and what it was doing before it was captured remains an open question.)

At least one set of calculations shows that the Moon must have been moving in a retrograde orbit when it was captured (a direction opposite to that in which it now moves). In such a case, tidal action acts to

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bring the Moon closer and closer to Earth (as Neptune's satellite, Triton, is, under similar conditions, being brought closer and closer to Neptune). After a certain point, the orbit is (in gradual stages) reversed, and the Moon began to recede again, eventually reaching its present distance.

The point of closest approach, during the 100 million years prior to the Cambrian, may have been not more than 11,500 miles from the surface of the Earth.

The Moon would then have been a terrific sight indeed. It would have been 10.8° in diameter and therefore 21 times as wide as the Moon appears now. It would have had 440 times the area and would therefore have been 440 times as bright.

But don't fall in love with the thought of our glorious pre-Cambrian satellite. In addition to beauty and brilliance, the nearby Moon produced tides—and what tides!

Let me at this point quote from an article in *American Scientist,* volume 54, page 458, entitled "Origin of the Cambrian-Precambrian Unconformity" and written by Walter S. Olson.*

He says, "At that time the tides were 8,000 times higher than at present, attaining amplitudes comparable with the present mean ocean depth." In other words, virtually the entire ocean was sloshed over the continents.

Olson goes on to say, "Anyone who has seen the effects of storm tides on the shore line will have a faint idea of the effect of tides with amplitudes of thousands of feet. The tides would eventually sweep across the interior and, laden with sediment and rock fragments, abrade the land surface and reduce the continents to peneplains. The detritus would fill any existing deep basins and be swept over the edges of the continental shelves and dumped into the oceans."

In other words, the Earth's surface would be sandpapered down to flatness while the oceans were filled to shallowness.

But Earth must have been bearing life at this time. Would it have survived? Obviously, it did survive. The polar oceans would be relatively little affected by the tides, and in them life must have held on grimly.

It may even have been that fairly complex life-forms survived through this watery madness and served to give the Cambrian a good headstart, thus making it unnecessary to suppose the first fossils developed from scratch.

** I have recently been roundly scolded by some nasty fellow for not presenting references, and so I thought I would do it just this once to see how it feels.*

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You might wonder why, if the period of Moon-madness contained complex life-forms, there was no evidence of it in the rocks. Ah—that's where the astronomical explanation is so handy. The abrasion of the tides would clearly have wiped the continents clean of all fossil-bearing rocks. The record of the rocks was erased and all we can possibly learn is what followed since.

For all we know, if this theory is correct, there might have been land-life in the pre-Cambrian. It would have been completely wiped out by the tides, leaving not a trace behind. Sea-life would have had to begin all over and produce a new land-life that, in all likelihood, would have no relationship whatever to this postulated pre-Cambrian form.

(And for those of us who are s.f. writers, the way seems open even for pre-Cambrian intelligence. Would they have managed to leave a record somehow? Where? What kind? Would they have launched rockets with frozen "men" aboard to come to life in the far future? Have they come to life? Did they tell Plato the story of Atlantis? Are they manning the flying saucers?—Anyone who wishes may make use of this. No charge.)

Then, when the fury at last died out, the Earth consisted of low-profile continents and shallow oceans. It was, in fact, one vast swamp-land and conditions must have been ideal for the proliferation of life.

Making up for the hundred million years of death, life-forms diversified and multiplied and then died in the marshes to form fossils. And thus we would have the Great Borning of the Cambrian.

Consider all this, then, and compare it with Velikovsky's dream of an Earth halting its rotation suddenly and accomplishing nothing more than helping Joshua win a battle.

Really!

Coming next month

F&SF's 18th Anniversary All-Star Issue will feature HOME THE HARD WAY, a never-before-published science fiction novelet by the late **Richard McKenna.** Also, new stories by the top names in the field, including **J. G. Ballard, Fritz Leiber, Avram Davidson** and **Samuel R. Delany.** The October issue is on sale August 31; watch for it.

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As this is being written, we are fresh from a weekend of Kosygin-watching, and, without pausing for close assessment, there's no denying the sense of pleasure (wonder?) derived from such unlikely scenes as the Soviet Premier shaking hands with the Mayor of Niagara Falls and acting like Lyndon Johnson's bosom buddy at Glassboro, N. J. To come down from the summit a bit, it is also satisfying to report that two Russian science-fiction writers are expected to attend the World Science Fiction Convention to be held in New York this Labor Day weekend. The story below was written by the acknowledged dean of Soviet science fiction. According to our intelligence, Ivan Antonovich Yefremov was born in 1907 in the village of Vyritsa in the Leningrad region. In 1940 he was graduated from Leningrad Mining Institute with a degree of Doctor of Biology and is now a professor in Paleontological Institute of the Academy of Sciences.

A SECRET FROM HELLAS

by I. Yefremov

"I'M VERY GRATEFUL TO ALL OF you," professor Israel Abramovitch Feinzimmer timidly addressed the gathering. "In spite of these difficult war days you've not forgotten my anniversary," his deep-sunk dark eyes lit up. "In gratitude I'll tell you a remarkable story of the recent past which, please, take as a token of my respect and trust for you."

As you know I've devoted all my life to the research of the human brain and of psychic phenomena. For the last several years, you must know, I've been working on the nature of memory. I have to admit I'm still feeling my way through a maze of inexplicable facts, but I've collected some data from which I've developed a theory I call the "Memory of Generations." Modern science maintains that memory is not hereditary, but I've discovered certain facts which prove the relay of some memory impressions from generation to generation. You have all noticed, for instance, the apparently unrelated fact of beauty, be it physical or architectural, or natural, being equally felt and appreciated by different people of all walks of life and education. It is my opinion that the experience of countless generations imbued in us a subconscious sense of perfection perceived in the form of beauty,

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and this sense finds its imprint in the subconscious part of memory innate from generation to generation. As I see it, some of the memory cells stored up during a person's lifetime, forming in identical patterns for hundreds of centuries principally in similar environments, have finally become hereditary. This unconscious or subconscious memory of generations makes up the foundation of our general thinking regardless of education or upbringing. Of course, this is only a theory.

But let me proceed. I theorize that in some rare cases an innate combination of memory cells tracing back to the life memory of past generations, so to say, bursts into the conscious mind.

And so my dear friends, recently I unexpectedly found evidence to prove the existence of the Memory of Generations. The war had compelled me to relinquish my purely scientific work, and being what I am, I could not remain a second echelon participant in the medical work of the Soviet army—I became a consultant to some of the largest hospitals where numerous contusions, shocks, psychoses and other brain traumas required the application of my long years of study.

I'd get home late at night. In my apartment on the Sretenski Boulevard I'd usually lounge for about two hours at my desk, resting and at the same time pondering on ways to cure the more difficult traumas. I'd sometimes make note of important facts or dig in medical journals, trying to uncover similar clinical case histories. On one such evening, as I had been mulling in my mind a case of loss of speech of a shell-shocked first lieutenant, and as a blueprint of a diagnosis began to form in my mind, the telephone rang. I had not been expecting any calls and, therefore, the ring invading the privacy of my concentration startled me. Frowning, I jerked off the receiver.

"Professor Feinzimmer?" the voice on the other end asked.

"Yes."

"Please excuse me for this late call. I called five times during the day; they told me you never returned before eleven."

"It's all right. I never go to bed before one. What can I do for you?"

"You see, Professor Novgorodsev gave me your name. He told me that you were the only man who could help me. He also told me that I'd make a very interesting case, so I thought . . ."

Since he had mentioned the name of my surgeon friend Novgorodsev, a man who referred to me a number of serious medical cases, I was sure that this, too, must be an interesting patient. "And who are you?" I asked.

"I'm a lieutenant, I was wounded, and have only recently been released from the hospital, and I must . . ."

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"And you must see me," I ended his thought. "Tomorrow at two in the first section of the second surgical clinic. Oh, you know the address . . . All right, ask for me and they'll show you."

There was a shy mumble of gratitude before the receiver was hung up. After trying for a while to guess the nature of my caller, I gave up. I got myself a smoke and returned to my interrupted thoughts.

The special hospital occupied a beautiful building, and in matters of important consultations I often availed myself of the chief surgeon's office. At two o'clock I stood at the entrance hall of the clinic and the next moment I was walking along a carpeted sound-proof corridor fenestrated with huge windows. At the last window stood a man, his arm in a sling. As I came closer I took a mental note of the tense fatigue on his young face. His military tunic, still bearing traces of recently removed lieutenant's insignia, went very well with his erect athletic figure. "Are you professor Feinzimmer?" he asked, walking up to me in a hurry. "I felt right away it was you. I'm the man who called you last night."

"Very well, let's go." I opened the door and showed him into the office.

"Let's get acquainted." From force of habit I gave him my hand. The lieutenant, taken aback, gave me his left hand. "My name is Victor Filippovitch Leontyev."

I smoked and offered him a cigarette. He refused; he sat there, his chest forward, the nimble fingers of his good hand nervously palping the fretwork of the massive desk. With professional thoroughness, I studied his outward appearance.

Regular features: a thin nose with well-defined, thick brows and small ears; a pleasantly drawn mouth, dark hair and dark-hazel eyes. A man of an impressionable and passionate nature, I said to myself, noting the guilty expression on his face which was characteristic of people either very nervous or very sick. While I was patiently peering at him, he once or twice glanced at my eyes but immediately looked away, twisting his neck several times as if trying to swallow something.

"Professor Novgorodsev told me you have been studying for quite some time hard-to-explain mental illnesses," the lieutenant confessed in a low, excited voice. He halted as if to catch his breath and smiled. I was charmed by his flitting and yet engaging smile which completely wiped out the glum fatigue from his face. "I'm now in very bad shape; I have hallucinations and often feel in me a violent tension. I'm afraid I'm going out of my mind. Besides, I also suffer from insomnia and have severe headaches right here," he pointed at the upper part of his occiput. "Many doctors have tried to cure me in different ways but nothing helped."

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"Tell me the story of your case history," I asked.

Again that charming flitting smile transformed his face. "I doubt if this has anything to do with my illness: I was wounded by mine shrapnel at the joint in my right hand, but there was no contusion. The shrapnel broke a bone. They took it out; did something to replant the bone, but so far my hand still dangles like a lash."

"In other words, they didn't notice any symptoms of contusion either at the time you were wounded or after?"

"No, there were no symptoms," he assured me.

"When did you begin to feel this mental disorder?"

"About three-and-a-half months ago. While still in the hospital I could feel my anxiety growing even though my health seemed better. Then it passed. Now it has returned . . . And I've been out of the hospital for two months."

"Now tell me, what do you think is the reason for this disorder?"

The lieutenant struggled with a growing sense of embarrassment. I was quick to come to his aid. "You want me to help you, don't you? So you have to give me as much information as possible," I told him. "I'm no magician or sorcerer, I'm a scientist. I need underlying facts to reach a diagnosis. I've plenty of time, so don't be bashful and tell me everything."

First stammering and fumbling for words, then gradually gaining courage, the lieutenant told me his history in words not devoid of an artistic eclat.

Until the war broke out, Leontyev had been a sculptor. Indeed, I remembered having seen some of his work at the exhibition on the Kusnetsky. They were mainly little statuettes of athletes, dancers and children, done very simply but with as thorough a knowledge of movement and body contour as only true talent reveals. Leontyev was also a good athlete. At a swimming contest he had met Irena, the girl whose perfect bodily form had captivated him. His eyes shone with a deep exuberance as he was telling me about his beloved. Not without a pinch of envy, I could visualize what a beautiful couple they must have made. One had to be in love and have the soul of an artist to be able to depict a girl in such concise, modest strokes and yet in such vivid colors. In short, the lieutenant won me over completely; he charmed me with his Irena in absentia. "Do you understand, professor," he said, leaning to me, "I'd wanted to create a statuette of Irena in which I'd capture her beauty and her vibrant fire of life. Through that statuette I'd wanted not only to serve the world but also express my gratitude to her."

I understood.

It didn't take long for the art-

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ist's project to take form, and with Irena as his constant companion, he had had only one decision to make: what material to use for his statuette? Marble was rejected because of its transparent whiteness, bronze was unacceptable because of its ungentle opacity, and other alloys either seemed to mortify imagination or lacked permanency. He had wanted to preserve the florescent beauty of Irena for eternity.

It was when he had come across some translations from ancient Greek authors who wrote about ivory statuettes (which never came through to our times), that Leontyev had made up his mind. Ivory was the material he was going to use: it had the firmness for working out the minutest details, exactly what a skillful artist needed to create the impression of life. Ivory had the color, the perfect smoothness and the permanency required, and pieces of ivory could be artfully integrated into a flawless statuette.

Thus Leontyev had started on his search for ivory. It wasn't an easy task; he might have failed had it not been for a geologist friend who had returned from North Siberia where a huge burial place of mammoths had been uncovered. The tusks, due to the eternal cold, were extremely well preserved. The artist had left immediately and returned with an excellent supply of ivory.

Then came the war. He had to leave Irena, his project, and fight for his fatherland. When he came back, she was as beautiful as ever, but he, his arm was useless.

The one-time desire flared up in him again, but he sorrowfully realized that his creative verve would only be dissipated by his physical handicap. The feeling of helplessness brought with it a dread of failure, of being unable to carve his masterpiece.

Weeks went by; the psychotic pressure had become unbearable and consequently he had begun to have difficulty in relating to other people. An all-encompassing unrecognizable emotion rising from the depth of his psyche seemed to be struggling for a way out. He had a ghost of an inkling there was something he ought to recall, something that would restore equanimity to his mind. "I eat and sleep little," he told me. "Instead of sleep I drift into a semi-conscious state and see all kinds of foggy thought-pictures."

I asked him if his hallucinations, or thought-pictures, as he called them, were repetitious. "Try to remember," I insisted, "if you can't find some common thread by which all your visions might be tied together?"

"Yes," Leontyev asserted after a brief pause. He had become cheerful.

"What is it?"

"Ancient Greece, I believe."

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"Well," I encouraged him, "please concentrate, give free flow to your thoughts and try to recreate one or two of your hallucinations for me. The clearer ones."

"There are many clear ones, professor," he was quick to point out, "but none seems to be complete. The trouble is that every one of my visions seems to gradually dissolve into some kind of mist. They slip away or break off . . ."

"What you've said is very important," I interrupted. "We'll get to that later. But now I'd like you to give me some samples of your thought-pictures."

"Here's a clear one," he said. "I see the shore of a calm sea, a bright sun, topaz-colored waves lapping greenish sand and almost reaching to the edge of a little dark-green grove of thick, broad-crowned trees. To its left there's a coastal plain, to its right a steep rocky slope. A twisting road leads up the slope, and I can sense this road behind the trees." The lieutenant paused, his face clothed with an expression of guilt. "That's all I can tell you, professor."

"Excellent, excellent! But first, how do you know that what you see is ancient Greece, and second, couldn't your visions be something like a painter's pictorialization of bygone life?"

The lieutenant was adamant. "I can't tell you how I know, but I do. Even though none of those visions looks like any pictures of ancient Greece I have ever seen."

"Well," I acquiesced. "That's enough about that. Give me another thought-picture of your hallucinations, please."

"Again the rocky slope. A dusty white road climbs up on it. The hot air shimmers and dazzles. High on the crest there are trees, and behind them, right at the edge of the cliff, a white-columned building. And that's the end . . ."

We took leave. The lieutenant's phantasies had given me no clue and showed no crack in the wall. Though unsure I'd be able to help him, I promised to give his case some thought and call him back in two days.

Those had been two taxing days. Unable to form any opinion about Leontyev's case, I nonetheless picked up the receiver and called him. His hopeful tone of voice made me feel even guiltier. I asked him if he had anything else to tell me.

"Yes, professor," he sounded eager. "A lot more."

"Tell it to me right over the phone," I asked.

"There's the white building with six tall columns right at the edge of the cliff. A white staircase protected by a parapet of precisely joined marble slabs runs up to it. The parapet ends in a smooth curve and under it there are clear-cut nude figures in low-relief motion. The slope is terraced and

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each terrace is full of statues and has a wide square planted with cypresses. I can't see the statues too clearly because the sun is terribly dazzling . . ."

After hanging up, I reclined in my chair and put my thoughts to work on Leontyev's case. A sudden burst of an idea brought to my mind the awareness that the pictures in his phantasies were fragmentary pieces of a whole panorama in its gradual states of development. If so, I reasoned, is it possible that I have uncovered in this man a living example of the Memory of Generations? Dominated by this idea, I began to put certain facts together and suddenly found the leading thread: Leontyev had been complaining of aches in the upper part of his occiput. That's where memory cells, the most rudimentary connections would be located! Evidently due to the tremendous mental stress, ancient impressions had begun to break through from the subliminal. His compulsion to recall something was without doubt a reflex of a subconscious thought impulse skimming unrevealed memory impressions. Being an artist, his visual sense was extremely well developed, and this was why his thought fragments expressed themselves in pictorial form.

This was it! I became convinced of it. Only one more item to ascertain: in spite of the late hour I picked up the receiver and dialed Leontyev.

"Is it you, professor?" He was as tense as usual. "You must have formed a diagnosis?"

"Do you know your family tree?"

He became annoyed. "How many times do I have to answer that? As far as I know there was no insanity, alcoholism or venereal disease in my family."

"I'm not interested in insanity," I tried to calm him. "Do you know of what nationality your ancestors were? Where they came from? You must be a southerner!"

"True, professor. But I don't see why . . ."

"Don't interrupt," I said. "I'll tell you why later. Who in your family comes from the south?"

"I'm no notable and have never kept strict family records. Both of my grandfather's parents were Cypriots by birth. But that was a long time ago. My grandfather had moved to Greece and from there to the Crimea. Myself, I am a native of the Crimea. But, professor, why do you need all this information?"

"You'll understand. If my guess is right." I couldn't hide my joy. He agreed to come to see me next morning.

Later, in bed, I pondered for a long time. The task was clear, the diagnosis was correct; the only thing left was to intensify and stimulate the manifestation of the

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Memory of Generations until it reached the climax necessary to cure Leontyev. What this climax would be I dared not predict.

Next morning Leontyev sat in the same office, in the same forward pose, his pale face attentive, his eyes following me as I paced around and expounded to him my theory. At last when I'd finished and sank into my chair, he remained for a while in deep thought.

I stirred. His body twitched; he raised his head. "Don't you think, professor, that the idea about an ivory statuette was more than incidental?" he asked, looking straight into my eyes.

"Who knows?" I said, still being absorbed in my thoughts about a new curative method that had just occurred to me.

"Wouldn't whatever I must try to recall have something to do with my statuette?" he insisted.

"Probably," my reply was instantaneous. His words seemed to have hit a point in my mind.

We agreed that he would try immediately to shut himself off from any outside interference, lock himself in his room and do his utmost to concentrate on his visions—in the dark, and whenever scenes would begin to disappear he'd make an effort to reinvoke them. I also gave him a prescription to help him stimulate his memory. There was some risk involved, of course, but we had to take it. He'd report to me every evening over the phone.

This time the lieutenant was in a hurry to get home. As he was leaving I realized that I had come to like the man. Next evening I was impatient for him to call; he did not. I became a little concerned and was about to give him a ring but desisted for fear of disturbing him in his concentration. Doubts about my method began to harass me.

The following evening the telephone rang. "Professor," Leontyev came right to the point. "You were certainly right. I did get in!" The unwholesome tension was gone from his voice.

"What are you talking about?" I asked. "Where did you get in?"

"Into that mansion, that white building in the picture," he hastened to explain. "Now all those clear pictures fit into each other; I can see now what's inside the house. It is a large room or a hall, and instead of a door it has a wide-open copper grate. Copper leaves are strewn all over the floor, statues all around and other things I can't see too clearly. At the wall, opposite the grate, running from the center of the hall there is a wide arcade through which I can see the glaring sky. There's another white statue at this arcade and next to it some stands and vessels. Oh, my God, it's clear to me now, this is a sculptor's workshop. So long, professor . . ."

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What followed was a click of the receiver. My restlessness was now as acute as the artist's. As a scientist, however, trained in patience, I soon was able to go about my routine work, despite the fact that the telephone was silent for two evenings. The morning thereafter, as I was about to leave for work, it rang.

"It seems, professor," Leontyev's voice sounded near exhaustion, "my travels in the ancient world are over. I'm all confused and also afraid." He didn't finish.

"All right, all right," I said. "Take it easy. I'll try to come as soon as I can. If not, I'll call."

I cancelled all my appointments for the morning and left for Tanganka where I had quite some trouble finding his small turret-crowned gray house ensconced in the back of a little orchard. The artist wasted no time in asking me inside. The room was almost completely dark, a thick drapery on the window and a blue cloth thrown over a little lamp barely allowed me to distinguish a few objects in the neat, simply furnished room. I smiled at the thought that he'd so scrupulously followed my instructions.

"Turn on the light," I said, "I can't see a blasted thing."

"Please, professor, let's not," my patient timorously demurred. "I'm afraid I'll lose my concentration, and if I do I'll have no strength to go on again."

Naturally I made no objection. Still, he removed the blue cloth from the lamp and asked me to sit down on a wide ottoman where he joined me. Even in the skimpy light I could see how sunk and pale his cheeks were.

"All right, what is it all about?" I tried to draw him out.

Leontyev slowly reached to a tabouret next to the ottoman and picked up a sheet of paper which he handed to me in silence. It was covered with several uneven lines of strange signs. There were crosses, angles, bows and 'eights' carefully drawn in groups apparently meant to form words. Of all the ancient alphabets I knew, and I had a smattering of a number of them, this didn't resemble any. As I sat there, contemplating those symbols, a premonition of something extraordinary began to overwhelm me, as if I was about to make an important discovery. I looked up—Leontyev's eyes were glued on me, his slightly ajar lips gave his face a childish expression of diligence.

"Do you make anything out of it, professor?" he asked in a trembling voice.

"I'm afraid not," I said. "But I hope to after you give me some explanations."

"This is all the same chain of visions," he said. "You remember when I called you I'd mentioned I was inside a house? I had gathered then it must have been a sculp-

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tor's workshop or an art school. The thought of a possible connection with my statuette idea made me anxious to return to my hallucinations. I began to see a definite pattern, some kind of sense which I was supposed to guess.

"I returned to my visions, concentrating harder, as you told me, but then the pictures, instead of flashing as before, would blur and sully. No sooner was a clear, long vision about to appear than I'd invariably return to the art school. Again and again I could see nothing else. I was getting desperate.

"Then I began noticing that part of the room was getting clearer with each new vision. I understood: the continuation of thought pictures would be found only inside the workshop—because no matter how hard I tried I could not get outside of it.

"Still, the right side of the wall opposite the grate was getting clearer and clearer. There was a low wide arched window. The vision would fade, and when it reappeared, I'd see more and more details.

"To the left against the background of pine trees and the sky seen through the arcade, I could see a silhouette of a small statue, about half the size of a man, all made of ivory. As I tried to get a better look at it, the picture would fade. There was another detail too that faded though it had been at first very distinct, even more than the statue. It was some kind of bathtub filled to the rim with a liquid. I could see very indistinctly some sort of statue in it, as if it were a drowned naked body. But the tub too became blurred, and beside it emerged a stone table with a square plate of smooth copper in the middle of it. It was covered with some signs and in front of it there was a black dagger and a blue glass bowl.

"That plate, or leaf, was getting clearer and clearer until it became well focused. I could see distinctly its green-hued surface with all those carved signs. Without understanding anything I guessed intuitively that this was the end of my thought picture series. Overcome by a sudden alarm, I began to draw the signs from the copper plate. You see, professor," the artist's fingers leafed through a heap of papers, "I had to do it over and over again. The vision would fade and then take hours to return. I'd sit patiently, waiting till I'd have this list complete. But now, I can't see anything else, I'm tired and I don't care any more . . ."

"W-wonderful," I said, stammering from welling excitement. "Here, take a few sleeping pills and get a good night's sleep. It's all over now. I believe your hallucinations have come to an end. I don't understand everything yet, but I think you've obtained what you need."

"A little more patience," I said

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to myself, walking to the trolley. "Everything should be over soon. Now to a hellenist to decipher these hieroglyphics." As soon as I returned to my apartment I quickly went to work on some trade guides and the telephone directory and finally located a hellenist.

"Where did you dig this up?" the hellenist squinted at me, as I sat in his office forty minutes later.

"I will tell you the story, but in the name of heaven first let me know what it is all about."

"You've brought me here a passage written in the so-called Cypriot characters," he explained in a dry voice. "This is a syllabic alphabet reading from right to left—the oldest in ancient Greece. It looks like it is in the Eolian dialect . . . It won't be easy to translate. The title line . . ." the hellenist's voice perked up, "mmm . . . quite interesting. It consists of three words: on top 'malacter elephantos', underneath, 'zitos'. The first two words mean literally a *softener of ivory* or you might say, a sculptor in ivory. 'Zitos' is some liquid to soften the ivory. You know, of course, that in ancient Greece sculptors knew how to soften ivory and mold it into the most superb work of art which they would re-inure later and return to its original hardness."

"Oh, how stupid of me. Everything is crystal-clear now," I jumped off the chair. "Please forgive me, for heaven's sake; what you've just said is very important to me, or rather for a patient of mine. Could you at least give me a general idea of what else it says there?"

He hitched his shoulders but made no reply. I could see, however, by the movement of his eyes that he was trying to give me an answer. I froze, trying to hold back my excitement and a growing sensation of wild joy. A few long minutes went by.

"As far as I can make out without special references," he said, "this is some kind of chemical formula . . . It won't be easy to interpret the names of some items here. They mention sea water, then an 'etakena' powder and next some Poseidon butter and so on." He stared at me, as if it were now my turn to do some explaining.

Pacing back and forth, I told the hellenist the whole story. As I was finishing, the expression of disbelief had disappeared from his face. He began to ferret in bookcases, pulling out one book after another while I was still getting ready to leave. I stopped at the door. "One more thing, please," I asked. "Why do you think my patient sees a dagger and a blue glass bowl on the table?"

"Since we've already started drawing conclusions," the hellenist suggested, "why not assume that the liquid 'zitos' was only released to chosen masters under oath and under the threat of death

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for divulging the secret. That's why you have the dagger and the poison, the usual attributes of a millenary-old consecration ritual."

As soon as I reached my office I called Leontyev. "I'm coming right away," he said curtly, hanging up.

I'll always remember that evening, sharp shadows from the desk lamp playing on Leontyev's face, his eyes tense with frenzy yet flashing with sparks of victory. "So I've discovered, or recalled this ancient secret?" he said. "I can't believe it. How was I able to do it!?"

I explained to him that science had nothing concrete on this subject. In the hoary past, his ancestors had apparently been sculptors who knew this secret. The vital importance of its formula might have preconditioned the formation of a strong link in the memory of one of his forefathers, which then was transferred on the subliminal level through the inheritance mechanism. In his case, because of his desire to carve Irena's statuette, the will and the intensity of all of his faculties combined to evoke a visual memory.

"In other words," he shot at me, "as soon as the passage has been translated, I'll have the formula? You are sure of that?"

"Yes," I said.

"Just think, my dream, I'll be able to fulfill it, with only one good hand!" His long fingers twaddled the desk. "I have to thank you, professor," his voice trembled.

Suddenly he darted up from his chair and clasped my hand, leaning toward me like a child toward his father. Before I could react, however, he turned away, as if ashamed of his impulse. I went outside, deeply moved, leaving my patient to his emotions.

Days went by, spring turned into summer and the autumn imperceptibly moved in. I had been fatigued from a heavy overload of work, and my health had failed me too. One morning I received an unexpected visit: a young couple, Leontyev and, as I guessed, Irena. The artist's arm was still in a sling, but he was a changed man. I'd not seen too often such gentility and joy blended in a man's face. And Irena? She was worthy of the artist's love and of all our efforts to uncover the secret from Hellas.

Irena gave me a hearty kiss and a long wordless gaze which was more eloquent in its gratitude than a thousand eulogies.

"I've dedicated the statue to you and to science," Leontyev told me effusively. "It's a gift from the saved to the savior, from emotion to reason."

And the statue? It was the incorporation of what we call beauty par excellence. The sculptor's love had bestowed upon a perfect bodily symmetry the impression of joyous movement, as graceful as flight, as the song of the woman who walked on air.

Translated by Selig O. Wassner

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